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JAMES GORDON'S WIFE.

JAMES GORDON'S WIFE.

"We are at school: through this strange life of ours.
We pass, like children through their teaching-time;
Training in lowly trust our highest powers,
Learning by common things truths most sublime."



IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1871.

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LONDON:
PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE,
BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.

TO

RENIRA AND LUCY MARTIN.

JAMES GORDON'S WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return !

JOHN MILTON.

THE Rector of Eversfield was dead.

Five-and-twenty years he had laboured among his people—had wrestled for them in prayer—had preached, to the best of his ability, God's Truth, standing Sunday by Sunday in the same place.

He had known sorrow in the course of those years ; and he had lived it down. He had known the sting of calumny ; and he had lived that calumny down. And joy, in

sweetness and infulness, had arisen upon him ; and had faded. Now all alike was blended into a dream. The book was closed. "After life's fitful fever, he slept well."

It was the day but one preceding the funeral. A chilly November day—sleet falling at intervals—the wind moaning dismally, as it swept the last leaves from the Rectory trees. Dismally, likewise, the same wind moaned within the house ; through and about the closed blinds, up and down the narrow staircase and the passage to which that staircase led :—a passage ending in two doors, set side by side.

The first of these two doors enclosed the chamber in which the coffin, with its silent burden, awaited the final change. The other opened into a pretty room, daintily furnished, where a fire was glimmering upon white curtains, upon gay chintz draperies, upon a little writing table rich in knick-nacks,

upon books, scrolls, pictures. Also upon the face of a young girl.

The girl lay stretched upon the bed. Her eyes were closed ; her eyebrows slightly contracted, as in pain. She was not beautiful ; she was not, critically speaking, pretty ; but she had soft brown hair, a delicate profile, a sweet mouth, a fair, blue-veined complexion. She appeared to be about eighteen or, at the utmost, nineteen years of age.

"I fancy she is half unconscious," whispered a voice at the door.

Two ladies, walking noiselessly, had entered. One, rubicund, portly, and a little vulgar, led the way, with the manner of a person who feels herself quite at home. The other, short, small, refined, was evidently a stranger. Her dress, a travelling dress, was somewhat dusty, as though fresh from the railroad ; and the expression with which she looked towards the bed spoke

much of curiosity, more of anxiety, but nothing of recognition.

"My dear!" said the rubicund lady, softly;
"Gabrielle!"

The girl opened her eyes.

"Your cousin has come to say 'How do you do.'"

"My cousin?"

"Your cousin Miss Gordon, love."

"Oh!"

She sat up, looking uncertainly round, her hand half extended. Miss Gordon advanced, and took the hand within her own.

"You are—let me think—are you Marian?"

"No, I am Olivia, the eldest of all. You know my name?"

"Yes, well," said Gabrielle, dreamily;
"it was kind in you to come."

"I could not have borne to stay away.

You must let me help you, so far as lies in my power."

"Thank you, I want no help—I am only tired."

"You are not very well, my child?"

"Not very."

"Does your head ache?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. You had better lie down again."

"Perhaps I had."

She lay down as she spoke, and turned her face away. For just now she was alive only to one awful fact: that her father—not her father only, but her friend, her mother, her all—was gone away, out of her reach, out of her world; to one strong desire: that death might speedily take her, as, where, it had taken him.

Olivia stood for some minutes, silently watching—so deep in thought, that, when

her companion touched her elbow, she started as though aroused from a dream.

“I think we may as well go downstairs,” whispered the rubicund lady; “she’s better alone, Miss Gordon;—better alone.”

CHAPTER II.

I have not look'd upon you nigh,
 Since that dear soul hath fall'n asleep.
 Great Nature is more wise than I :
 I will not tell you not to weep.
 ALFRED TENNYSON.

THE drawing-room, although small, was pretty and comfortable ; but it was lonely, with the loneliness of death. Beside the fire stood a large arm-chair, to which the rubicund lady pointed.

"That was the poor Rector's special chair," said she, sighing—unable, nevertheless, to conceal her delight in the office of cicerone among scenes so mournful : "In that very chair, Miss Gordon, was he sitting when the stroke took him."

"The stroke was totally unexpected, I fear?"

"Ah! deary me, yes; he had seemed every bit as well as usual. I had met him in the village in the afternoon—him and Gabrielle; and afterwards they had come home, and had their teas, and were sitting, like they sat most evenings, by the fire: Gabrielle on that foot-stool, Miss Gordon, and the poor Rector, as I said, in the chair."

"Yes?"

"He dozed off—so Gabrielle tells me—being tired. Presently she noticed something peculiar in his breathing; looked up, and saw a change. Some girls would have screeched; but screechings are not in Gabrielle's way. She only just rose from her seat, and walked into the kitchen, and asked the cook to please come and look at her papa, for he didn't seem well. So cook came,

and saw in a minute how it was:—she lost her own mother by a stroke.”

“He did not die that evening?”

“No; they sent for Mr. Barber, my husband, who brought him so far round that he opened his eyes, and seemed to know us. And he lay all the night through, holding Gabrielle's hand, and looking, looking at her. Until, of a sudden, towards morning, he said, ‘My darling!’—and then ‘God bless you!’—and died.”

“Poor Gabrielle!”

“Ah! you may well say that. She is one with whom all things go very deep; it has been so from her childhood. And she was quite wrapped up in her father. To tell you the truth, Mr. Barber fears serious consequences, if she continue in her present state. I 'ope, though, she will revive under your influence, Miss Gordon, as she gets to know you better.”

"I regret exceedingly," replied Miss Gordon, "that we are such strangers to her. But we have always failed in persuading Mr. Wynn to come and see us at Farnley. He could not bring his mind to undertake so long a journey from his parish ; much less to send Gabrielle alone."

"She has never been anywhere alone, poor child! It is a singular coincidence; but, only last week, when the poor Rector and my 'usband were talking—the Rector as well, to all appearance, as you or I—'Barber,' he said, 'if ever anything should happen to me,' he said, 'write to my cousins in Yorkshire—Mr. and Miss Gordon. They are almost the only relatives I have, this side the grave.' So, when the melancholy event occurred, my 'usband knew what to do. And most kind it is of you, I'm sure, to respond thus promptly."

"I could not have borne to stay away,"

Olivia repeated; "Mr. Gordon will follow me to-morrow. I suppose there is a room which he——"

"Can 'ave? Oh, certainly. Mr. Godfrey's room, just as he left it. I will give orders."

"Mr. Godfrey's room!" exclaimed Olivia. "Who is Mr. Godfrey?"

Mrs. Barber was about to answer; and had in fact begun, with a "What, Miss Gordon! you have never heard of Mr. Godfrey?"—when the conversation was interrupted by the housemaid, who came to say, that Mr. Barber and his gig were at the door, that he could not wait, and that, if Mrs. Barber wished to go home with him, he should thank her to make haste.

"Perraps, then, you'll excuse me, Miss Gordon," said the rubicund lady, rising: "I hope to return shortly, and to stay the night; but I must just have a peep at my children first, and see to Mr. Barber's supper. Please

to make yourself comfortable, and to ring for anything that you may want. It quite shocks me to leave you alone!"

"Thank you—I am used to being alone," said Olivia, smiling.

"Jane is very attentive; and I do 'ope you'll make a good tea. You must want it, I'm sure, after your journey."

With a profound bow, Mrs. Barber departed; and the wheels of the gig were soon heard to die away in the distance.

Olivia seated herself beside the fire, and presently fell into a fit of musing; of which, at first, the young orphan upstairs formed the absorbing theme. Ere long, however, she found her fancy hovering around that unknown Mr. Godfrey, mentioned with such familiarity by Mrs. Barber. He appeared to be one of the household; yet Gabrielle had no brother: and Olivia knew that Mr. Wynn had kept neither curate nor pupil. It was

probable, she thought, that this Mr. Godfrey had been a personal friend of the Rector's; perhaps they had been at college together, or even at school. He must, then, be an elderly man—most likely an elderly bachelor; who, having no near ties of his own, regarded the peaceful little Rectory as a home; resorting thither so often, for refreshment and for rest, that one room had been exclusively devoted to his use, and called by his name.

Pondering these things, Olivia beheld, in a vision, a grey-haired personage—a little bald, and a little infirm, and a second father to Gabrielle. When she went from the drawing-room to the dining-room, to partake of the "severe tea," she looked all round the little hall; expecting to see on some hook a hat, or in some corner a stick, which must undoubtedly be known as the property of Mr. Godfrey. But in this she was dis-

appointed ; for—barring a chair or two—the hall was empty.

She had returned, her solitary meal concluded, to the drawing-room fire ; when the silence that enfolded the house, was broken by a sudden bell. The next moment, she heard the housemaid hurrying to the door ; and, in an impatient manner, remove the chain.

“ Surely James cannot have changed his mind,” thought Olivia, “ and have followed me to-day ? ”

She opened the drawing-room door a little way, and listened.

“ No ! that is not James’s voice.”

“ Well, Jane ! ”

“ Oh, Mr. Godfrey, sir ! we didn’t expect you till Thursday. And your room is bespoke for another gentleman ! But, if you wouldn’t mind the poor master’s dressing-room, sir——”

"Hush, Jane, don't hurry on so fast; I shall sleep at the inn. How is Miss Gabrielle?"

"Oh, sir! Miss Gabrielle's in a sad way; but it will do her good to see you. If you'll please to walk into the drawing-room, sir, I'll tell her."

"No, stop—she mustn't be disturbed, Jane——" But the eager damsel was already beyond earshot; and Mr. Godfrey did walk into the drawing-room.

Olivia was awaiting him, well pleased. It would be such a relief to talk things over with this kind old man!—to hear his advice concerning Gabrielle, his views about her disposition, and so forth. She looked expectantly towards the door, and saw—a fair-haired youth of middle height, with blue eyes, an open countenance, and an incipient moustache. On perceiving Olivia, he stopped short; while she, in her utter astonishment, neither spoke nor moved.

"I beg your pardon," he said, bowing and colouring: "I was not aware——My dear Gabrielle!"

For, suddenly, Gabrielle stood at his elbow. She seemed hardly the same girl whom Olivia had seen so listless, so almost lifeless. Her cheeks were flushed; her hands trembled with eagerness,—and, as the young man took them between his own, she burst into a passion of tears.

Olivia would have retired; but they were standing before the door. She saw, however, that her presence was forgotten.

"Oh, Charlie—it is hard; it is more than I can bear——"

"*He* is happy.—Think of that," the young man answered very gently.

"Yes; he is happy . . . and I am selfish. But I can't help it, Charlie."

"I know—of course—don't try to help it, dear."

"He said—do you remember?—he said that he must have you at Christmas, to help with the carols——"

Then there was a silence ; broken only by the subdued sound of her weeping.

"Gabrielle—come and sit down," murmured the young man, at last : "You are too weak to stand."

He passed his arm half round her waist, and drew her to the sofa ; and Olivia, seizing the opportunity, stole away. She went back to the dining-room, and sat bewildered—how long, she did not know. It might have been ten minutes—it might have been fifty ; it was all the same to Olivia.

Her presence of mind was gradually returning, when a second peal rang through the house ; followed by a shriek and a confusion, and a summons from Jane. Would Miss Gordon please to come ? Miss Gabrielle was dying !

Gabrielle was not dying ; but she lay unconscious and colourless,—exhausted, so Olivia believed, by that paroxysm of tears.

Mr. Godfrey carried her upstairs, and at length she opened her eyes ; soon, however—as Jane expressed it—to “go off again.” One fainting fit followed another, in rapid succession ; and Olivia began to grow exceedingly anxious. It was a deep relief, towards nine o'clock, to hear Mrs. Barber's voice.

“I see 'ow it is,” said the rubicund lady ; “Gabrielle's in for an illness. And a severe one. We must send for my 'usband.”

“If you please, ma'am,” whispered Jane, approaching with a confidential air—“Mr. Godfrey wants to know if Miss Gabrielle is any better?”

“Mr. Godfrey ! Ah, poor fellow ! I saw him walking up and down in the churchyard. I daresay, now, Mr. God-

frey would run and fetch my 'usband."

"I will ask him," said Olivia.

He was standing at the foot of the stairs.

"Is she better? Can I be of any use?" he asked, in one breath.

"Thank you. Mr. Barber——" began Olivia; but she got no further.

"I will fetch him. He shall be here as soon as possible," the young man said; snatched up his hat, and was gone.

Olivia smiled, despite her anxiety, and took an early opportunity of questioning Mrs. Barber, as to whom this Mr. Godfrey might be.

"He comes of a good family, Miss Gordon. He lived at the Grange, with Lady Godfrey, his grandma. As children, he and Gabrielle were always together—morning, noon, and night; and he was a mighty favourite with the Rector. Since Lady Godfrey

diéd, and the Grange was shut up, he has been here regularly, every vacation. What he will do now, and what Gabrielle will do without him, I can't tell, poor things, I'm sure."

The rubicund lady smiled, as she spoke ; and looked, in Olivia's eyes, full of significance. But Olivia was at once too cautious and too well-bred, to seek further information from Mrs. Barber. She preferred to supply it, for the present, from her own mind.

"Poor child ! Poor Gabrielle !" she thought. "I feel happier about her now. Though who would have expected Mr. Godfrey to be so young a man ? Still, as he is,—and as Mr. Wynn seems to have countenanced him——only I hope his prospects are tolerable."

Olivia's suspicions were encouraged, and, in her own opinion, certified, when, happening

to open a book which lay on Gabrielle's table, she read the following words:—

*“ Gabrielle Wynn,
From her true knight,
Charles Richard Godfrey.”*

“ A settled thing, I perceive,” said Olivia, closing the book, with decision. “ Not a positive engagement as yet, or Mrs. Barber would surely have mentioned it. But an understanding—a settled understanding. What a comfort ! ”

Olivia sat herself down, and mused once more.

CHAPTER III.

Within my breast there is no light,
 But the cold light of stars ;
 I give the first watch of the night
 To the red planet Mars.

The star of the unconquered will,
 He rises in my breast,
 Serene, and resolute, and still,
 And calm, and self-possessed.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

FARNLEY, the country seat of the house of Gordon, was situated in one of the most beautiful parts of the beautiful West Riding. Round about it, far as the eye could reach, lay the accompanying property—woods, villages, windmills, pasture-land, with here and there—only here and there—a coat-pit ; and, northward, a boundary of moorland, dim and blue.

The owner of this goodly heritage, James Fortescue Gordon, had succeeded to it at the age of thirteen. His parents had died within a few months of one another, leaving, beside himself, four daughters—Olivia, Annie, Marian, and Cicely. Olivia was considerably the eldest. Between her own birth and that of Annie, a long succession of infant lives had dawned and set. Thus she had ever been less a sister than a mother to the children who remained; and at the time when our story opens, had long regarded herself as an established old maid. Annie had married early, and had settled in a southern county. The younger girls might, sooner or later, be expected to follow in her steps; and Olivia joyfully anticipated a life-long *tête-à-tête* with James. For she felt sure that James would never marry—he was not of a marrying disposition.

Olivia worshipped this brother. Twelve

years his senior, she yet leant on him, as a wife leans on her husband,—looked up to him, as a daughter looks up to her father. His faults were virtues in her eyes; his virtues were works of supererogation. As to his talents,—they would have been remarkable in a demigod! And James Gordon was, without doubt, singularly talented. A short time back, his name had been in every mouth, as, by an unusual majority, Senior Wrangler and first Smith's prizeman of his year. The career thus brilliantly begun, promised to continue brilliantly. Since leaving Cambridge, he had devoted considerable time to the cultivation of his intellectual powers, had read much, had thought more, and had written a little. That little had already, in the judgment of competent critics, promoted him to no mean place among the higher order of authors.

And already, to his own neighbourhood,

he was as much a lion, as, in time, he might probably become to the world at large. The golden bait, "to meet Mr. Gordon," was turned to full account by all who, for any reason, wished to assemble a company of the *élite*. No mamma with more daughters than she could manage, no host with visitors difficult to entertain, no aspirant for the honours of "good society," failed to obtain this bait, if possible, and to hold it forth. He was courted on all sides; and all pronounced him worthy to be courted. There were, however, some who said that he was too young to face with impunity the fumes of incense so profuse; who feared, indeed, that his head would thereby be turned. But their anxiety was groundless. James Gordon's head stood in no danger from incense such as this. Not because he was humble; but because he was proud.

These people—these ordinary men and

women,—who were so full of commonplace interests, of ephemeral anxieties ; who, in theory, regarded talent and its productions as things to be patronized and encouraged, but, in practice, as of no particular importance, so long as marriages, foxes, and the affairs of neighbours remain to provide the human mind with sustenance :—what were these people, that their opinions should elate, or should depress ? He had marked out for himself a path far above their heads : a path among the stars, and the star-like spirits of the earth. Neither were any popular assurances needed to convince him that he was no common man. A voice in his own breast told him this ; and that voice never spoke more plainly than when he sat alone, among his books. At such times, he forgot the outer world, or thought of it only as a philosopher thinks, with a view to renovation or reformation. He would pore, far on into the night, over the records of past

ages,—the deeds which men had done, the victories which they had achieved, the discoveries which they had made; until his soul burned within him, and he felt that he too was capable of great things.

He intended to leave behind him an immortal name, and also a shining example. Perfection was his aim; to attain it, he resolved that self-control must be his leading principle. He would have every impulse, every passion, at his beck and call, as it were. Reason alone should regulate his actions. His morals should be irreproachable. He would show himself honourable, high-minded, true, and just. He would be a good churchman, a good landlord, a good brother; he would be charitable to the poor; equally courteous to high and low. Neither in minor details should any flaw be found. He would not only think and argue well; he would also chat well, ride well,

shoot well. Whatsoever he undertook to do—were it to write a book, or were it to cut a pencil—he would do it well.

His heart, he determined, must always yield subjection to his intellect. The indulgence of any strong attachment was, in his eyes, beneath the dignity of a reasonable mind. That a silly girl, a miss in her teens, should regard love as the *bonum ultimum*, was only a matter of course. But that a man, capable of something higher, an intellectual man, should live in his affections—above all, that he should condescend to fall in love, to risk his peace on the smiles of a woman:—what notion was more degrading? When heaven and earth, when the past, the present, and the future, are all teeming with excellent and glorious things; and life is not long enough for the consideration of a thousandth, nay, of a millionth part:—that he should turn aside from these, and, because

she has a pretty face, forsooth, or a sweet voice, or a charming manner, should devote himself to her—could any folly be greater?

With such feelings James Gordon went out into society; looked calmly upon women renowned for their beauty, for their grace, for their powers of fascination; spent familiar hours in their company, was admired and courted: and returned heart-whole to his study. He was quite prepared, however, to admit that a time might come, when, for the good of his establishment, he might feel himself called upon to marry. In this case, he would endeavour to find some reasonable and placid person, who would satisfy his requirements, without giving or expecting anything romantic in the way of love. Upon such a person he would readily bestow a moderate affection, like that which he already bestowed upon Olivia, and, in a less degree, upon Annie, Marian,

and Cissy. It would not absorb him ; it would not draw down his mind. He would still be free to pursue his shining path, continually higher.

These sentiments were the last of which anyone who relied upon appearances would suspect him. Seemingly—like Madame de Stael's Oswald—" *il réunissait tout ce qui peut entraîner les autres et soi-même.*" He was barely five-and-twenty, and he looked no more. He was exceedingly handsome ; and his face bore the stamp of his genius. His manners were universally agreeable ; and he could converse, with apparent interest, upon any subject, from politics to croquet.

But how little we know of one another in this life, where we walk by sight ! When we estimate the inward by the outward man, what blunders we are apt to make !—What blunders, moreover, when we estimate ourselves by our dreams !

CHAPTER IV.

Yes ; and just now I have seen him,
 Cold, smiling, and blest,
 Laid in his coffin. God help me !
 While he is at rest,
 I am cursed still to live—
 Death loved him the best.

ADELAIDE ANNE PROCTER.

THE dawn of her father's funeral-day found Gabrielle lying in an unconscious state ; succeeded, ere long, by the delirium of fever. The unusual stir, the hum of subdued voices in the rooms below, the tramp of footsteps mounting the stairs, and then more cautiously descending, the roll of wheels, solemn and slow, over the gravel ; all which awakened in Olivia a dreary sickness of heart—made no impression whatever

upon Gabrielle. Her lethargy only gave way when, later, a muffled peal broke from the belfry. Then, in a voice of terrible pathos, she cried, that Somebody was dead!

Thus commenced a wearisome illness; which lasted during many weeks. The winter snows had melted, the frosts were abating, flowers had begun to blossom, and trees to bud, when Gabrielle left her room. Had Mr. Barber been one degree less skillful, Olivia less tender, or the old nurse less attentive, she would have left it never more; or rather, she would so effectually have left it, as to follow her father to the world "beyond the sun." A little while the young soul lingered, its pinions half unfolded, hovering midway between that world and ours. But only a little while. Soon, albeit reluctantly, it sank down again——back to earth.

Meantime the executors—James Gordon,

and a neighbouring clergyman, Mr. Lascelles—had examined into the state of her affairs. They found that Mr. Wynn had left no debts, and no fortune. Gabrielle's sole inheritance was the small dowry of her mother; a sum barely sufficient to maintain her, from year to year, in clothes and pocket-money. On the first discovery of this fact, Mr. Lascelles—aware that, beyond a somewhat remote cousinship, she had no claim upon the Gordons—was seriously alarmed. But James speedily dispelled his anxieties, remarking that Farnley was now her home; and that he should of course provide for her as for one of his own sisters.

“You are exceedingly kind,” said Mr. Lascelles: “But allow me to suggest that a step so important, demands mature consideration. Have you thought of all the inconveniences——”

"Who on earth would take her if we did not?" interrupted James. "There is nothing else to be done. Besides, one woman more or less in a house makes very little difference. My sisters will be glad to have her society; and as for me—I shouldn't care if there were ten of her, so that they didn't live in my study."

"Well! she won't trouble you long, I suspect," observed Mr. Lascelles, with a significant smile.

"What do you mean?" said James, shortly.

"You know young Godfrey?"

"That straw-haired fellow who is for ever coming to ask after my cousin? He was at the funeral, too. I know him."

"He is in his last year at Oxford; he'll be ordained ere long; and there's a good fat living waiting for him. He may marry as soon as he feels inclined, and——"

"Is he engaged to marry my cousin?"

"Not positively engaged. But next door to it. He is head over ears in love."

"Oh! Youths like Godfrey are always head over ears in love. How about this deed?"

Mr. Lascelles was recalled to his work; first glancing, half amused, half irritated, at his co-executor—and wondering by what vast gulf of inferiority youths like Godfrey were distinguished from youths like Gordon!

One day, towards the middle of February, Gabrielle was sitting, propped up with pillows in an arm-chair, before the drawing-room fire. Olivia, entering, stood for a minute at her side, and watched her, somewhat sadly.

"You are tired, dear. Perhaps it was not wise in me to let you come downstairs."

“Oh, yes! I am almost well now, you know. Can you stay with me, Olivia? I want to talk to you.”

“Talk away,” said Olivia, who was already seated, tatting in hand; “the more you say, the better I shall be pleased; so long as you do not fatigue yourself.”

“You are very kind,” said Gabrielle, smiling faintly. “That was one thing I wished to tell you—how thankful I am for all your kindness, and for all that you have done.”

“My dear child, who could help being kind to you? And as to ‘all that I have done,’ you know I delight in nursing; and you have been so good and so patient. Besides, the real business part, so to speak, has fallen to old Bromehead; and I have been home twice——”

“Yes,—how glad I was when you came back!” interrupted Gabrielle. “But you

look quite fagged and worn. Now that I am so much better, I want you to go home for good."

"I shall, ere long ; when you are better still,—well enough to accept Mrs. Barber's proposal of taking you to the sea."

"Then, since I must live, I will try to become well, as soon as possible, for your sake."

"Since you *must* live! Oh! Gabrielle!"

"Why should I hide the truth, Olivia—that I am living against my will? You know I would infinitely rather die. I have told you so all along."

"Yes ; and I have told you all along that a day will come, when you will thank God that you did not die. We don't know what is really good for us ; or it would be no such difficult matter to pray, Thy will be done."

"I can't think why we were made so

blind and shortsighted," said the young girl, with a sigh.

"You had better stop talking for the present, dear Gabrielle. Let me shake up your pillows. A little nap will do you all the good in the world."

"Not yet—I have not finished. I want to speak to you about what you said last week—about coming to live at Farnley."

"Well, dear?"

"I have been thinking it over, and it does not seem right. Why should I force myself upon you? You might find me an inconvenience, a burden; and that I could not bear. When my strength returns, I shall go out as a governess."

"Indeed," said Olivia, quickly, "you will not. You don't know with what pleasure I look forward to having you at Farnley. You will be my companion when Marian and Cissy are from home, and James is in

his study. You will help me among my poor, audit my accounts, read to me while I work. I assure you I have every intention of turning you to good account."

"I hope so, indeed, if I should come. But your brother—he——"

"Gabrielle," interposed Olivia, a little stiffly, "when you know James, you will find that he never says what he does not mean, or makes proposals which he does not wish to be accepted. I told you how, from the first, he took it for granted that Farnley would be your home."

"He is very kind. But——"

"We will have no more 'buts,'" said Olivia. "I insist on your shutting your eyes, and going off to sleep. And, first, promise to sleep away the governess idea, that I may not hear of it again."

"You shan't hear of it for the present, at any rate," said Gabrielle, smiling. "But

sleep is out of the question, just now. If I mustn't talk to you, please talk to me; tell me about Farnley—the Farnley people, I mean."

With this request Olivia was nothing loath to comply. The next half hour passed pleasantly to each; Gabrielle putting in a question, now and then, but, for the most part, listening silently: while Olivia gave glowing descriptions of Annie, Annie's husband, Annie's children, of Marian, and of Cissy; and—last, not least—of James. Olivia was never weary of enlarging on James and his multifarious perfections. Gabrielle had constantly been entertained thereby, during her convalescence; and had grown, much to Olivia's delight, to regard him as a hero, an Admirable Crichton—such an one as she had seen often in books and in dreams, but never in real life.

"I shall be dreadfully afraid of him,

though," she said, when Olivia, having long discoursed with unflagging eloquence, paused to take breath.

Reply was precluded by the entrance of Jane, with a letter addressed to Gabrielle.

"A letter from Charlie!"—A flush of pleasure—or, as Olivia thought, of something deeper than pleasure—mounted to her temples. She tore the envelope open, with trembling hands; and a long silence followed.

"Olivia! What do you think?" she exclaimed, suddenly starting from her reclining posture: "Meddiscombe, Charlie's future living, is only two miles from Farnley."

"Meddiscombe! Is Meddiscombe his living? I know it well."

"Oh! I must get you to tell me all about it. Is the scenery pretty? and the rectory?"

"The rectory is a comfortable house, of grey stone. The scenery is beautiful—not

one colliery within sight. I have met Mr. Hawkins, the present incumbent, at dinner-parties now and then. He is holding the living, I suppose, for Mr. Godfrey?"

"Yes; and Charlie will begin as his curate. Charlie hopes to be ordained next Christmas; but that is a long while, isn't it? to wait, before I see him again."

"You have known him a long time?"

"Oh, all my life; he is like an elder brother. I can hardly fancy what ten months without him will be. He's such a dear boy—so good, and so kind! and—papa was so fond of him."

Then Gabrielle went off into a dream. And Olivia likewise.

CHAPTER V.

Some mighty gulf of separation past,
I seem'd transported to another world.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

THE sun had recently gone down behind a pile of storm clouds; and the winds which had raged throughout the day were beginning to sink, to die into feeble moans, as though exhausted by their own turbulence. Gradually, but surely, the shadows of twilight were enveloping Farnley Park: darkening the long slopes that undulated beneath the budding trees; hiding the nooks where tufts of primroses and dog-violets heralded spring. To Gabrielle, who, at this hour, was approaching her new home, the scene appeared an emblem of her life:

whose sun, she believed, like to-day's sun, had set; leaving twilight only.

A month at the sea-side, with Mrs. Barber, had done much towards restoring her health. But she still felt weak; and it was a very pale, a very wan young face that watched in anxious curiosity from the carriage window.

"I shall be glad to see Olivia again," she thought: "But I wish James were not there. I feel so in awe of him; and Olivia said that he had such penetrating eyes. What a beautiful park this is! What fine old trees! And there is the house in the distance—how large and grand! I have often read of such a place, but I never thought of it as a home—it seemed too splendid. I would rather be going to our own little rectory, with the servants so glad to see me, and the drawing-room fire so cosy, and my stool, and the tea waiting to be

made, and papa's chair in its old place."

"Are you feeling ill, ma'am?" inquired a dignified maid, who had been sent to escort her from the station, and who now sat on the opposite seat, in solemn respectability.

"I am only tired, thank you," answered Gabrielle, and repressed the swelling tears.

The drive through the park was long; the road was winding. Four times had the house appeared in sight, only to vanish among intervening trees; and Gabrielle, after as many fits of needless agitation, had just prepared her mind for another half-hour's journey, when the carriage turned an angle, made a wide sweep, and stopped. The goal was reached.

A long three-storied pile, of irregular architecture; part, to all appearance, very old, and part comparatively new. At the east end, thickly covered with ivy, was a small chapel—to Gabrielle's eyes the one bit

of home. A stately personage, whom—a little doubtfully—she supposed to be the butler, advanced to meet her, opened the carriage-door. Mechanically she descended; followed him up a flight of steps, on either side of which reposed a huge stone lion—across the hall—a vision of marble pillars, orange shrubs, statues—finally, through a tiny ante-chamber, into a great drawing-room with a painted ceiling: where, all alone, he left her. Then Gabrielle looked up at the ceiling, round at the pictures, and exclaimed:

“No, I can never, never, Never feel at home here!”

“My poor child!” cried Olivia’s voice at the door, “Here you are.”—A kiss.—“I cannot say how glad I am to see you. And you look really better; the sea has worked wonders.”—Another kiss, and another.—“How stupid of Wilcox to bring you into this desolate room. Come with me, dear.”

Possessing herself of Gabrielle's travelling-bag, she led the way to a small octagon-shaped boudoir, where books, and work, and pretty things abounded, and a bright little fire imparted a universal glow of cheerfulness and warmth.

"Now," said Olivia, wheeling a crimson sofa into the fire's vicinity, "you shall lie here, and I will give you some tea. This is my own special sitting-room. Isn't it snug?"

She was pouring out a fragrant cup of tea as she spoke, and placing it on a little table beside the sofa. And Gabrielle drank the tea, and found it refreshing; and her desolate feelings began to melt "like snawflakes i' thaw."

"After all," she thought, "home depends on people, not on places."

"We shall be a small party, Gabrielle—only a trio—for some time to come. Marian and Cissy are away, making a round of visits.

You will be a great acquisition to me. I seldom see James, excepting at meals, and in the evening. Half the day he is out, and the other half, he immures himself in his study."

"What does he do there?"

"In his study? Oh, he reads and writes; he is always writing something. Just now he is busy about an article for the *Quarterly Review*. Gabrielle, dear, I am so sorry,—but he can't bear me to be unpunctual; I must go and dress. You will lie still and rest—sleep if possible—and I will send your dinner here."

This proposal Gabrielle gratefully accepted. She felt hardly equal, just now, to encounter the formidable James: and when the maid who had escorted her to Farnley reappeared, bringing a pair of comfortable slippers, and a pillow to enhance the ease of the crimson sofa, her contentment, physically speaking, was complete. She lay

watching the fire, and listening to the sounds in the hall, such sounds as betoken a dinner-table in course of preparation. Presently a gong sounded, and Olivia peeped into the room; begged her to ring if she should want anything more, and reiterated the hope that she might sleep. Then the maid came again, bearing a tray with a tempting little dinner—a dinner exactly suited to Gabrielle's still fastidious appetite. And, this disposed of, and the tray removed, and the maid gone finally, Gabrielle did sleep.

Dreamlessly, at first; but, after a while, confused visions, blending one with another, began to flit before her. Now her father was alive again—they were at Eversfield as of old; now he lay on his deathbed, and she watched his laboured breathing. Then with Charlie Godfrey, on a high mountain; and the mountain gave way, and they fell—down—down; and suddenly Charlie was

gone, and she was alone, in a valley, walking rapidly.

The Valley of the Shadow of Death, she thought, but she could not be sure—everything was so vague, so mysterious. And after all, was she alone? It seemed as though one walked by her side,—a figure—whose, she knew not. At the end of the valley was an opening; in the distance she heard music—beautiful music, swelling ever louder. Eager to reach it, she pressed forward, that figure still at her side. Occasionally his pace slackened; then, by an irresistible impulse, she turned and beckoned him on.

The valley widened; she had reached the opening. Before her stood a multitude, a mighty multitude, bathed in a flood of sunshine; the music proceeded from their midst. She heard it in its fulness now, and it was as the sound of many waters. All instruments were there,—the organ, the

harp, the trumpet, the flute, the clarionet. All voices were there,—grand basses, sweet tenors, clear sopranos. All people were there—children, women, men,—every variety of stature, of face, of form. Around, above, among the clouds, floated innumerable angels. The air was full of music, of beauty, of glory. Then the unknown figure, hitherto so silent, smiled on her, and said, “God bless you!”

She had been only dreaming, she knew; and yet—how was it that the music continued?

“Has James awakened you, dear?” asked Olivia, at her side.

“James?” she echoed, absently.

“Don’t you hear him, playing on the chapel organ? I fear it did awaken you.”

“It is very beautiful,” said Gabrielle. “It gave me a beautiful dream.”

"I have been in Heaven, and he took me there!" she thought, as her eyes closed once more.

Further witness she had none, this night, of her cousin James's vicinity; Olivia insisted upon sending her to bed, and, moreover, forbade her to rise before breakfast in the morning. But when the morning came, Gabrielle awoke refreshed; and the faithful Olivia, knocking, as the gong sounded, at her door, found her not only dressed, but looking—Olivia herself admitted—better than she had looked that year.

So they descended together to the breakfast-room—a pleasant room, large and cheerful, and fragrant with hyacinths. The sun was beaming through the windows as brightly, almost as warmly, as in June. Below them were two fountains, in full play. The crystal water sprang up, as if in joy, to greet the sunshine, and fell transformed to

gold. A peacock stood near, unfolding its gorgeous tail.

Involuntarily an exclamation of delight burst from Gabrielle's lips.

"The peacock and the fountain match well, don't they?" said a voice behind her. She turned with a start, and met the eyes—very large, very dark, very brilliant—of a young man, who had entered unobserved, and was standing at her elbow ; a tall young man, distinguished-looking, and of athletic build.

"I don't think we need an introduction?" he said, smiling, as he proffered his hand.

"You are my cousin James, I suppose," she answered, shyly.

"And you are my cousin Gabrielle. I am glad to welcome you to Farnley."

"Thank you," murmured Gabrielle, and turned again to the window. But she saw the fountain no longer.

"The tea is ready," said Olivia, from behind the urn.

"So am I," replied James; "I have walked to Holt's farm, and back, this morning; and my natural appetite is none the less."

"To Holt's farm and back? Ten miles! Why did you go so early?"

"I wanted to catch the old man before he started for market. May I give you some ham, Miss Wy—— Gabrielle? No? Then you must have this egg. I met that son of his yesterday, Olivia—the black sheep."

"Anthony?"

"Yes, that's the name. Well, I met him on my way from the Featherstones. Poor fellow! you never saw such a wreck. I should say he was far gone in decline. And there he is at Rotherbridge, living as he can, craving for peace with his father, but

afraid to go home. I volunteered to try what I could do in the way of intercession."

"I fear you would not have much success. Holt is so terribly hard!"

"Yes, he's hard enough. He gave way at last, though. He will fetch the lad home to-day."

"Indeed?" exclaimed Olivia. "So soon! Ah! James, that's what poor old Nurse used to call your 'gift of coming over people!'"

James did not apparently hear this speech. He turned to Gabrielle, and hoped that she felt herself rested.

"Oh yes, thank you, I slept so well!" said Gabrielle—still shy.

"This house is a harbour of refuge, in one respect. No ghost, notwithstanding its age, has ever been seen in it. Rather a bad compliment, I fear, if we come to sift the matter! But, at any rate, our nights are our own."

"Yes. I suppose we should be more distinguished for a ghost or two," said Olivia. "But it is not a distinction that I desire."

"Gabrielle feels the same, no doubt. Now, for my part, I should enjoy meeting a ghost. It would be something fresh, at least. Besides, what are we ourselves but ghosts?—only we are veiled."

"If you talk so, you will make us afraid of ourselves!" exclaimed Olivia. But Gabrielle smiled.

"Do you believe in ghosts?" inquired James, addressing her again. "The *bond-fide* ghost, I mean—the kind of thing that comes at night, in a white sheet, walks like the rustle of silk, and so forth?"

"Does anyone, now-a-days, believe in anything so foolish?" cried Gabrielle.

"Does anyone now-a-days confess to anything so foolish?" said James, smiling.

Then having, as he conceived, done his duty by her, he turned to Olivia, and, during the remainder of the meal, the brother and sister discussed the letters of the morning, with other family matters, leaving Gabrielle to her own meditations. It was a relief to think that the first interview with this formidable James was over. Though, after all, he was not so very formidable! He made her feel shy, a little in awe—she could fancy him, on occasion, sarcastic; still, on the whole, he was both agreeable and attractive, and she believed that he could, if he chose, be fascinating. Then his face. She had never, that she remembered, seen such a face before—one in which physical beauty and intellectual greatness were so wonderfully united. Olivia might well be proud of him. What sister would not be proud of such a brother? In short—since Gabrielle's organs of veneration

and ideality were as large as their scope for exercise had been limited—she had worked herself, before breakfast was over, into a fit of genuine hero-worship.

A bell, ringing long and loudly, called to prayers; and Olivia led the way, through a baize door, which opened from the hall, and down a stone-flagged passage, to the chapel. The chapel, which had been built towards the middle of the fourteenth century, was a good specimen of the richest style of decorated architecture. East and west were two large windows, each of seven lights; the other windows were small, but very beautiful, their pointed arches highly ornamented with flowers and foliage, delicately carved in stone. The glass was generally of a somewhat later date, and retained much of its first glory in radiant colouring. Canopied niches adorned the walls, each containing a statue, more or less perfect, of some apostle

or saint. The canopies were also highly ornamented; as indeed was every part of the building. Gurgoyles, cherubs, faces angelic or human, good or bad, peered from each corner; and in the ribbings of the roof, no opportunity had been lost, for the insertion of a bunch of nuts or acorns, a star, or a flower half hidden among leaves.

A group of angels, carved in oak, with grand, pure faces, stood on the chancel step, supporting the huge brass candlestick; and three similar angels, two at the organ, and one at the vestry door, were armed with staves, which, hollow at the end, served to carry wax lights. The chancel also contained two marble monuments, master-pieces of mediæval sculpture; but, as Gabrielle sat beside Olivia, her eye wandered beyond these, to the east window. It was a window erected—as she learned from the old English inscription at its base—in honour of James

Gordon, Knight, aged sixty-eight years, and of Cicely his wife, aged sixty-six years, the builders of that chapel,—who had passed to their rest in the month of August, 1370, within two days of one another.

What kind of man had he been, Gabrielle wondered, that James Gordon of so very long ago? He had lived in a chivalrous time; perhaps he had been one of those ideal knights of whom she had read: "*Sans peur et sans reproche*"—"true and tender," "selfless men and stainless gentlemen;" one of those who, although not wanting in glory of other kinds, counted it ever their highest glory to defend the defenceless, to help the helpless, to minister to the weak. And perhaps, in outward form, he had resembled the James Gordon of to-day. Perhaps "Cicely his wife," had been as proud of him, as Olivia was now of his descendant.

She must have been a happy woman, that

Cicely—so it seemed to Gabrielle. How her heart must have swelled when she saw her colours waving from his helmet at the tournament! She must have felt anxious, though, sometimes, when she helped to buckle his steel corslet, and then saw him ride away, not knowing whether he would ever ride home again. And no doubt she was sometimes, in their youth, a little jealous too; for if he were indeed such another as his namesake, he must have been admired by many—many fairer, perhaps, than she.

Well! all was over now; she had long been at rest—and oh, what a peaceful story of their later life, that inscription, to Gabrielle's mind, told! They had grown old together; they had built this chapel together—it might be as a thank-offering for the blessings which together they had enjoyed; and when that separation came, at the thought of which they had surely often

trembled, it proved, in God's mercy, so brief, that, ere the one who was left could have had time to realize its wretchedness, it was over, and—so Gabrielle trusted—they were re-united, for ever and for ever.

She wished that it were possible to look back five hundred years, and see the old couple kneeling, as they must often have knelt, side by side in this very chapel. Then she tried to imagine that sight, until they became as living forms before her—forms far more real, for the time, than those which were actually present. Suddenly she awoke to the consciousness that a long train of servants—modern servants—were filing in through a side door, and that James was seated at the organ. Immediately afterwards an elderly clergyman, short, and inclined to stoutness, with iron-grey hair, bristly whiskers, and a preoccupied manner, entered in his surplice, and the service began.

The clergyman read in gusts, reminding Gabrielle of the wind. His voice first rose to ungoverned heights, then fell to unfathomable depths. His air, however, was fervent, and his intonation was impressive; and James's music, to her ear, was sublime. Beneath his fingers the dead notes awoke to such life and glory, as the unsophisticated Gabrielle never doubted to come straight from his heart. And she supposed that it was the reserve of his grand, self-contained nature which made his countenance all the while so immovable—she could almost have thought, so cold.

“Stay a moment, James,” said Olivia, when the service was over, and the servants were gone: “I must introduce Gabrielle to Mr. Morris.”

“The clergyman?” asked Gabrielle.

“*The* clergyman! *Our* clergyman!” said James. “Our own especial property.”

“Our chaplain—so called,” explained Olivia, smiling. “He lives in a small house in the park, and reads prayers for us here, every morning, Sundays excepted. He was once the vicar of the parish; but his health failed.”

She paused abruptly; for at this moment the vestry door opened, and Mr. Morris reappeared.

He had doffed his surplice, exposing to view a rusty coat, in some places much too large, and in some too small. With this the fellow-garments seemed made to correspond; the cravat, in particular, being at least twice as capacious as any other cravat which Gabrielle had ever seen, and arranged in folds of a more singular formation than she would otherwise have believed it possible for a cravat to assume. Walking uncertainly, he approached Olivia; took her hand in silence, without anything of a smile, or a change of countenance; and dropped it. Then, his own hands

clasped behind him, his head slightly on one side, and his eyes fixed on the ground, he remarked in such a tone as would convey the idea of continuing, rather than of commencing, a conversation :

"Happy release. She died last night—Mrs. Linley."

"Ah ! so I guessed when I heard the bell. Poor thing ! She has suffered very much," said Olivia.

Mr. Morris started from his dreamy posture, and wheeled himself round towards James.

"Unless I greatly err," he said, "you have in your library the *Chronographia* of Georgius Syncellus?"

"Yes, we have. Do you want it?" inquired James.

"If you'll trust it with me. I must refer to something. My treatise is at a standstill."

"You had better come and hunt it out. It is with other old fellows of the same genus. You're welcome to as many as you like."

Mr. Morris received this speech in silence. A minute later, he started, and said,

"Thanks."

"I'll show you where they are," returned James, moving towards the door. Mr. Morris was following, when Olivia intercepted him, to introduce Gabrielle. He paused, stared absently at the young stranger, and made a distant bow. Immediately afterwards, as though prompted by something in her appearance, he observed,

"The Ten Tribes are not by any means so untraceable as many have supposed. For instance——"

"How is your breathing, Mr. Morris?" inquired James, who, being a few steps in advance, had lost these words.

“Better, thanks—better on the whole. Now for Syncellus.”

The library adjoined the chapel. He hastened to the side where the most ancient of the books were deposited, and stood looking up in admiring veneration, while, for the first time, a faint smile brightened his face.

“Sacrilege ! sacrilege !” he broke forth, an instant later.

“What’s the matter ?” said James.

“To think that your grandfather should have the—the—— I beg your pardon ; but to think that he could rebind such a book ! One of the oldest copies extant of the Vulgate. Patched up and rebound. Alas ! Alas !”

“Yes, it was a terrible blunder. It can’t be helped now, though. Here is Syncellus,” said James.

Mr. Morris groaned again, but received the folio ; opened it reverently, his head on

one side again, and his body thrown somewhat backward; finally, with a mutter of "Don't let me detain you," relapsed into abstraction, and an armchair.

Olivia followed her brother, in order to whisper with an expectant smile, "Well, James! what do you think of Gabrielle?"

"Think of her! Now is not that a question worthy of woman? What can I be expected to think, having made her acquaintance exactly one hour and twenty minutes ago?"

"But she must strike you in some way. My own opinion has been unchanged from the first moment that I saw her."

"Well," said James, considering: "What do I think? I know what I don't think. I don't think her pretty."

"Don't you?" cried Olivia; "I have often seen her look pretty. At any rate, she has a most attractive face."

"I will try to find the attraction when I have time," replied James; "for the present I must content myself by believing in it."

He turned towards his study, leaving Olivia a little crestfallen and much disappointed. She was never satisfied with her own tastes, unless they were shared by James; she had taken a fancy to Gabrielle at first sight, and she had expected him to do the same.

"He is so engrossed with his philosophies," she murmured, "he cares for nothing else. Really, sometimes, I could almost wish that he were more like ordinary people!"

CHAPTER VI.

“ My life upon’t,—thine eye
 Hath stay’d upon some favour that it loves ;
 Hath it not, boy ?”

“ A little, by your favour.”

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE.

A FORTNIGHT had gone by, and Gabrielle was no longer a stranger at Farnley. She knew her way about the house ; she had explored the gardens ; she had discovered the prettiest spots in the park. She had accompanied Olivia to the schools, and to some of the cottages ; also in various calls among the surrounding families. The first excitement of the change in her life had begun to wear away ; she was settling down in a monotonous round of quiet occupations.

Breakfast at half-past nine ; luncheon at half-past one ; dinner at seven : such was the order of the day. After breakfast, Gabrielle practised, read, and wrote a letter—if a letter were owing to either of her two correspondents—Mrs. Barber and Charlie Godfrey. After luncheon, she and Olivia drove or walked, paid or received visits, played tête-à-tête games of croquêt. After dinner, reading aloud and working, with a little music, filled up the time till prayers.

Gabrielle was already weary of this routine. It seemed to her that she was leading an empty life, doing no good to herself or to anybody else. She missed the thousand and one small services which she had rendered daily to her father ; which had kept her head and her fingers constantly busy, but had sent her happy to her bed, because she had been useful. She missed her household duties, her village children, even her

accounts—accounts which, once, she had felt so irksome. Her favourite pursuits, her reading, her music, seemed, now that their critic and director was gone, to have lost their zest. Olivia was extremely kind, but she had her own employments ; and Gabrielle's dreams of aiding in these quickly evaporated. For Olivia, despite her first professions, was one of those persons who are never satisfied, unless what they have to do, be done entirely by themselves. Gabrielle's attempts at co-operation were more of a burden than an assistance. This Gabrielle was not slow to discover ; and the attempts ceased. Olivia petted her, mothered her, watched over her, and the young girl loved her dearly. But Olivia did not go beyond a certain point : and she could not satisfy Gabrielle's cravings.

Of James they saw very little. He was out, or in his study, all day, appearing only

at meals, and frequently not then. When, however, he did find himself in Gabrielle's company, he treated her with unimpeachable politeness; addressed a fair portion of his remarks to her; communicated any bit of news, public or private, which he fancied might be in her way; inquired what she thought of Yorkshire—and so forth. But it was politeness, and no more. No real interest appeared either in tone or in manner; both were courteous, attentive—and cold. The subjects which he chose for conversation were light and trivial; often such as, in an experienced hand, would have diverged into rattle and badinage. But Gabrielle's hand was not experienced. She sat quiet and a little shy, smiling when required, replying—"Yes," or "No," or "Did you indeed?" or "Very likely." He must think her very tiresome! She did wish that she could answer him better! She wished,

also, that he would sometimes talk of what interested himself—instead of stooping, and failing, to find what might interest her.

The sick yearnings after her father, after the old Eversfield life, increased rather than diminished. She gathered no strength as the days went by; she was still pale and wan. Olivia watched her with considerable anxiety; and, one evening, went to James for advice.

“Five months is a long time to a young girl like Gabrielle; and it is now upwards of five months since her loss. Yet she does not seem to be getting over it in the least; and she looks so delicate! What can we do?”

“I am not a good person to ask,” said James. “I don’t pretend to understand girls. They are queer beings. Either they have no soul at all, or they are overburdened with it. I can’t say that they interest me.”

“But do leave your writing, just to-night, and come to the drawing-room. It is so dull for her there, with no company but mine. Do !”

“As you like,” said James. “My review is finished; I am at your service for the present.”

He extinguished the study candles, and repaired to the drawing-room. Gabrielle was lying on the sofa; her eyes were closed. She might almost have been taken for one of Chantrey's marble figures—she was so still, so white. Perhaps she was half asleep; perhaps absorbed in thought: she did not hear James's step. Olivia had gone upstairs in search of some work; and all was silence.

James sat down in a low chair at a short distance from the sofa; and, opening a book that lay near him, began to read. But presently his eyes wandered towards the girlish

profile which, a few months back, seen much as he saw it now, had taken his sister's heart by storm. For the first time since he had known Gabrielle,—half curious, half interested,—he scrutinized her closely. By degrees a softer expression stole over his countenance. He was conscious of a strange thrill, an indefinable emotion, such as he had never before experienced. It was pity, he supposed; she looked so young, yet so sad.

Suddenly Gabrielle raised her eyes, and encountered that deep, fixed gaze. The colour rushed into her face, and, strangely enough, into his own. He felt embarrassed, he did not know why; and each was equally relieved when, at this moment, Olivia reappeared.

Gabrielle was quickly on her feet, and the first to break silence.

"When did you come in?" she asked.

"I never heard you!"

"You were asleep," said James.

"No, indeed,—indeed I was not," as he smiled and looked incredulous.

"You must have been uncommonly interested in your thoughts, then. If you would not call me impertinent, I should like to know what they were."

"I was not exactly thinking—I was looking at something."

"I suppose it would be too much to ask the nature of that something?"

"It was a place—a landscape," said Gabrielle. Then, perceiving that James's book lay closed upon the table, while James himself was leaning forward, and watching her, with—what she had never till now beheld—something of eagerness in his face, she felt herself encouraged to proceed. "I saw it once—I mean really—a few years ago. It is a place some miles from Eversfield, a bend in the river, very lonely and

very still. The bank is very steep on one side; on the other it slopes gently to the water's edge. The steep bank is cleft in two, with a valley between; and when I was there, this valley was carpeted with leaves, which had fallen from the trees above it. The autumnal tints were in full beauty—every imaginable shade—dark green, light green, copper colour, russet, brown. High on the bank was a wooden bench; where you could sit and look straight down—hundreds of feet—into the water, and see the sky, and the grass, and the trees, and their tints, all reflected, like a picture. A few jackdaws were flying about, wheeling towards the river, and cawing in a wild, melancholy way. The atmosphere was subdued and quiet; there were no human sights or sounds. It was like being shut out from the world.”

“And when I entered just now, you were

trying to shut yourself out again—sitting on the wooden bench, and listening to the jackdaws? No wonder my footstep escaped you.”

“I was trying to see the place as I suppose it is at this moment—the trees standing dark and grim against the sky, and a wake of moonlight on the water. And I was thinking——”

“Well?”

“You’ll laugh if I go on.”

“Never mind. What is there in a friendly laugh? You must go on now.”

“I was thinking that, if suicide were allowable, it would be very pleasant—for anyone who was unhappy, you know—to go to the side that slopes so gently among the trees, and lie down in the cool water and float away. Death would be so easy—hardly like death, there—with that beautiful, peaceful place for the last glimpse of earth.”

"And the jackdaws to caw the last requiem ! I suspect that if ever suicide should become 'allowable,' we should have to keep a pretty strict watch over you ; otherwise you would be off to 'that beautiful, peaceful place,' by the very first train next morning."

Gabrielle smiled ; but it was not a happy smile.

"I'll tell you what, Gabrielle," pursued James, kindling into sudden warmth ; "such a death as you describe, might be very pretty, and very sentimental, but it would also be very idle and very cowardly. There is a class of persons—chiefly third-rate poets, and—I beg your pardon—young ladies—who think it exceedingly fine to feel and to express a perpetual sickly weariness of life. Nothing to me is more intensely provoking, and worse—more degrading to human nature. What are we worth if we can't weather a few

showers, if we can't live, can't work our work, without our 'dear gazelles,' and so forth?"

"But, surely," burst in Gabrielle, "there are cases, real sorrows, when——How can we help wishing to follow; to be reunited——"

She paused, half choked by her own vehemence. Then, meeting James's eye, she coloured violently.

"You may call them morbid, sentimental, those people who long for death, and perhaps you are right. But you should not look on them so hardly. Instead of despising, you should pity—help them, if you can, to overcome the morbidness and the sentimentality—to see that some happiness may still be left to them, or, at any rate, some work. Often, I daresay, they would give worlds to get rid of that longing, only they don't know how."

“Gabrielle, stop one moment. Listen. You mistake; I was not speaking of such people as those—people who are really sinking under real sorrow. Although even they—but I won’t go on about that. The class I meant, make sorrow for themselves. They wish to die—or, rather, fancy that they wish it—because they are misunderstood; or because they love, and their love is unrequited; or some similar stuff. They may be known by certain symptoms—among which is the repudiating of meat, and the writing of verses.”

“What is the matter, James?” cried Olivia from the other end of the room—
“You look very much perturbed.”

“I? I am not in the least perturbed, thank you, my dear Olivia.” He rose, his countenance instantaneously recovering its usual equanimity. “By-the-by, where are

the foreign photographs?—those I brought from the Continent?”

A moment later, a sandal-wood box, together with a stereoscope, stood on a little table before the sofa where Gabrielle sat; and James was installed at her side.

“You seem partial to landscapes,” said he, with his slightly patronizing smile: “Perhaps you would like to see these?”

He opened the box, revealing a large collection of slides: from which he selected one, a transparent one, and handed the stereoscope to Gabrielle. She took it somewhat listlessly, but no sooner had she raised it to her eyes, than her whole aspect changed.

“Oh! what is this? How very beautiful!”

“‘I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs,’” quoted James, watching her with much amusement. “Do you see the gondolas?”

"Oh, yes! And is this really the Bridge of Sighs? Is it a true likeness?"

"Very true. I have seen the original often, looking just so, the surface of the water like glass, as it is there, and that solemn, old-world air about the houses. Are you there, by this time? You must fancy it strangely silent—only the dash of the oars to be heard, with a bell, or a gondolier's song, now and then. No waggons, no carriages, no street-cries."

"I can imagine it all," said Gabrielle.

"Well! you have seen it by daylight. Shut the stereoscope, and hold it up to the lamp—yes, so. Now you see it by moonlight."

"I like this almost better. Thank you. What a pity it is only a photograph!"

"Yes, and I've done a stupid thing—shown you the best first. It is a good collection, but it has nothing to equal that

Bridge of Sighs. However, here are some Swiss views, by no means to be disdained. Do you know this ?”

“It must be the Mer de Glâce : it so embodies a description I once read.”

“Your imagination is not your weak point, I perceive. Do you recognise that figure to the left—the fellow leaning on an alpenstock ?”

“Oh, yes, I see ! It is yourself.”

“They shouted that, if I would stand still, I should be immortal. The first I did ; the last remains to be proved. I had a friend with me, and a guide, but they were huddled out of sight. The photographer was arbitrary, and would only include one figure. Here”—he substituted another slide—“this is fine.”

“This is from a picture, I think ; isn't it ?”

“A picture founded on Longfellow's poem of ‘Walter Von Der Vogelweide.’”

"I know that poem well ; I have it set to music. Oh ! here are the birds feasting, and the ' portly abbot ' saying, ' Why this waste of food ? ' "

"So you have the poem set to music ? I should like to hear it. I did not know that you sang."

"I sing only a little, to amuse myself," said Gabrielle, hurriedly. "I am not sure, indeed, whether I ought to call it singing. I have no idea of what my voice really is."

"Has it always wasted its sweetness on the desert air, then ? Have you never sung to your friends ?"

"Only to—papa and Mrs. Barber, and Char—one other person. I had not many friends. Our village was very lonely. We were quite what people call buried."

"But now you are unearthed, and you must unearth your voice. I want so much to hear ' Vogelweide ! ' Do sing it at once,

while Olivia makes the tea. I will open the piano."

No sooner said than done. Gabrielle shortly found herself seated upon the music-stool, "Walter Von Der Vogelweide" before her, James behind her, and a candle on each side. * It would be disobliging, she thought, to "make a fuss" about so simple a matter. She therefore determined to do her best; although her heart beat fast and nervously, her fingers trembled, and a mist obscured her eyes. True, her father had delighted in her voice, and Charlie Godfrey was never weary of praising it. But then—so Gabrielle argued—her father and Charlie loved her; and love is blind.

She made a strong effort, and began.

"Vogelweide the Minnesinger,
When he left this world of ours,
Laid his body in the cloister,
Under Wurtzburg's minster towers.

And he gave the monks his treasures,
Gave them all with this behest:
They should feed the birds at noontide
Daily on his place of rest ;

Saying, ' From these wandering minstrels
I have learned the art of song ;
Let me now repay the lessons
They have taught so well and long.'

Thus the bard of love departed ;
And, fulfilling his desire,
On his tomb the birds were feasted
By the children of the choir.

Day by day, o'er tower and turret,
In foul weather and in fair,
Day by day, in vaster numbers,
Flocked the poets of the air.

On the tree whose heavy branches
Overshadowed all the place,
On the pavement, on the tombstone,
On the poet's sculptured face.

On the cross-bars of each window,
On the lintel of each door,
They renewed the War of Wartburg,
Which the bard had fought before.

There they sang their merry carols,
Sang their lauds on every side ;
And the name their voices uttered
Was the name of Vogelweide.

Till at length the portly abbot
Murmured ' Why this waste of food ?
Be it changed to loaves henceforward
For our fasting brotherhood.'

Then in vain o'er tower and turret,
From the walls and woodland nests,
When the minster bells rang noontide,
Gathered the unwelcome guests.

Then in vain, with cries discordant,
Clamorous round the Gothic spire,
Screamed the feathered Minnesingers
For the children of the choir.

Time has long effaced the inscriptions
On the cloister's funeral stones,
And tradition only tells us
Where repose the poet's bones.

But around the vast Cathedral,
By sweet echoes multiplied,
Still the birds repeat the legend,
And the name of Vogelweide."

Long before she had reached the end,
nervousness and self were forgotten ; swal-
lowed up in the familiar words, in the simple,
plaintive air, in the accompaniment—so like
the flapping of innumerable wings. Only
when the last note was silent, she awoke, as

from a dream, to find that James was ransacking her portfolio in search of other songs.

"Gabrielle," said he, "that voice did not deserve to be buried. It is one of the sweetest voices I ever heard. You must have lessons."

"You must have lessons," echoed Olivia, who was seated before the tea-table, some distance off, intent upon her tatting: "I shall see about it as soon as possible. Marian's old——"

Here she found a knot in her cotton, and her voice died away.

"'Daybreak!' That is one of my great favourites," cried James. "Come, Gabrielle, it would be selfish to refuse. You don't know what a treat you are giving me."

So Gabrielle, divided between pleasure and bewilderment, sang "Daybreak;" and, after

"Daybreak," "The Storm;" and, after "The Storm," "The Brook."

"I could almost find it in my heart to say,

" 'How I wis' it never was done!'

But you had better stop—you look tired. Here is a cup of tea to revive you. And have you really lived, till now, in a state of uncertainty as to whether you did or did not possess a voice?"

"I seldom thought about it—much," said Gabrielle, smiling and blushing. "I sang because I delighted to sing, and because—" Here the smile faded. "Is there anything remarkable in my voice, then?" she asked, in all simplicity. "Is it at all different from the generality of voices? You have heard a great many, I suppose?"

"Yes, I have heard a great many; and scarcely one, I think, superior to yours in tone. I don't say this to flatter you," he added, as Gabrielle looked incredulous. "In

my opinion, nobody should be ignorant of his or her own powers."

"It would be making a mountain of a molehill, though, to call my voice—the simple capacity of singing—a power."

"No, I don't agree with you there," said James. "However, I can't stay, as I should like, to discuss the matter. I promised to look in on Morris this evening, to hear the last few pages of a mighty treatise which he is writing about the Ten Missing Tribes of Israel. So now I must wish you good night. Thank you once more."

"Good night," returned Gabrielle, and he departed. But Gabrielle's voice sang on in his ears. Sang on while Mr. Morris read, making the Treatise melodious. Sang on as he walked home across the park. Sang on in dreams, throughout the hours of darkness, and when he awoke next morning, it was singing still.

CHAPTER VII.

A banner with the strange device,

Excelsior !

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

THE school-room, which had retained its title—although the race of Farnley governesses had long been extinct—was a quiet, shady apartment, with a baize door, secluding it in great measure from sounds of the outer world. Its windows opened upon a lonely little flower-garden. Creepers of various kinds—noisette roses, honeysuckle, and jesamine—gathered round them, and enclosed them like a frame. In this room Gabrielle found an asylum, when she wished to be undisturbed ; and to this room, soon

after prayers, on the day following her conversation with James, she carried the portfolio of songs.

Her experiences of the previous evening had left an agreeable impression on her mind. It was so delightful to think that anything which she had power to do, could afford real pleasure to James! And further, it was such a surprise! Not that she could bring herself to believe all that he had said about her voice; but it must, at least, since he had said so much, be worth some cultivation! So Gabrielle seated herself at the old school-room piano, prepared for an hour of diligent practice.

She had struck one chord, when the baize door swung on its hinges—the inner door opened—and a head appeared.

“Here she is!” cried Olivia, and entered; followed by James.

“That’s right, Gabrielle!” said he, ap-

proaching the piano ; " I am rejoiced to find you so well occupied."

" Perhaps you won't care to be interrupted," said Olivia. " Otherwise——"

" What is it ?" asked Gabrielle, rising with heightened colour. " I am ready for anything that you wish."

" We came to inquire what you would wish," returned Olivia : " James is going into Rotherbridge, dear, on magistrate's business ; and he thinks it might be a good opportunity for you to see Mr. Yates—Marian's old master—about your singing lessons. I myself have a little shopping to get through. So, if you like, I'll order the pony-carriage. What do you say ?"

Gabrielle glanced at James, and saw that he was watching her somewhat eagerly—and as if he hoped that she would say yes. She thanked Olivia, and replied that she should like it very much.

"That's settled, then," observed James, his usual *nonchalance* returning: "Olivia, suppose you send down to the Vicarage, and ask whether Mrs. Edgecumbe will come with us? She is always complaining of the difficulty of getting into Rotherbridge."

"Yes, and Bradley is selling off, by-the-by. I'll write a note," said Olivia.

"But what a strange humour James is in to-day!" she remarked to Gabrielle, when he had quitted the room: "Your going was his proposal, too. He does not often trouble himself about such minor matters. Gabrielle, I hope both you and Mrs. Edgecumbe will be properly sensible of the honour?"

Gabrielle laughed—assured Olivia that she, for her part, felt fathoms deep in obligation—and ran upstairs with a lighter heart than she had known since her father's death.

Olivia, left alone, pondered the virtues of her Juggernaut. His interest, the previous evening, in Gabrielle's singing; his anxiety that she should drive to Rotherbridge to-day: what benevolence! what consideration! His feeling heart was touched; he wished to rouse her, to divert her mind. And how inobtrusively, how delicately he went to work!—quite, indeed, as though it had been to please himself.

* “Dear James!” cried Olivia—her constant ejaculation—sealing the note of invitation to Mrs. Edgecumbe.

Half-an-hour later, drawn up in front of the long, irregular pile which, a fortnight ago, had seemed so formidable in Gabrielle's eyes, behold a pretty little carriage, constructed to hold four persons, and drawn by a pair of jet-black ponies. The ponies are thorough-bred, and therefore impatient. It is evidently most grievous to them to be com-

pelled to stand, while the process of taking seats, adjusting wraps, and so forth, is enacting.

"Gabrielle, should you very much mind sitting in front with me? If not, you would be doing a great kindness to Mrs. Edgecumbe and Olivia. They can gossip so delightfully, you know, in that back seat."

"I never gossip; neither does Mrs. Edgecumbe. But arrange it your own way," said Olivia, who was armed with a huge travelling-bag, a long list of commissions, a shawl for herself, and a cloak for her cousin.

"Then, Gabrielle, will you get in here? The back seat is rather more comfortable; but self-denial for the sake of others is a wholesome exercise. Why do you bring that bag, Olivia? I thought you had only 'a little shopping,'" said James, maliciously, as he took the reins.

Olivia, deep in her commissions, made no reply, and off started the impatient ponies, at the rate of twenty miles an hour.

"This is the first drive, Gabrielle, that I have had the honour of taking you. I must try my best to make it a pleasant one. Do you think I shall succeed?"

"I don't know."

James looked highly amused.

"I wonder whether you are descended from a certain worthy individual, of whom I read this morning that he was 'truthful even unto bluntness?' Or perhaps you feel it a stern duty to discourage the sinful practice of fishing for compliments?"

"I felt nothing at all," answered Gabrielle, blushing; "I said what came into my head."

"Exactly—'truthful,' etc. Well, never mind. Have you made Mrs. Edgecumbe's acquaintance yet?"

"Yes—I went to see her with Olivia."

"She and Olivia are great cronies. Olivia always takes to people like Mrs. Edgecumbe—people devoted to their families."

"Well, is it not quite right to be devoted to one's family?"

"Oh! quite—of course. Highly proper. But here we are at the Vicarage; and there, as usual, is the family in question, soiling its pinafores, and spoiling the garden. Hallo! Willie, how are you? Run in, will you, and see if mamma is ready? I can't leave my ponies."

"Are they naughty ponies?" inquired a squeaking voice; while children of all sizes and ages collected about the gates.

"Ay, the very essence—double-distilled—of naughtiness. It is all that I can do to hold them."

"Papa's old pony is never held. He waits alone, while papa goes into the cottages."

"Yes, but papa's old pony is old, you see ; which these ponies are not : and respectable ; which these are not : and devoted to the family ; which is the best of all,—as this young lady would tell you."

All eyes were instantly directed towards "this young lady ;" and Gabrielle found it somewhat difficult to bow with proper gravity to Mrs. Edgecumbe ; who now appeared, followed by her husband.

"How do you do, Miss Gordon ? So kind to think of me. Good morning, Mr. Gordon. How do you do, Miss Wynn ? Thank you, yes, I am quite comfortable. Edward, my love, the shawl, please—and the basket. Thank you—that will do. Oh ! and, Edward"—in a lower tone—"don't let the children get to the green gooseberries ; and Harry must dine on rice pudding—nothing else, remember. Good-bye, my darlings—give papa no trouble. Don't tire

yourself in the parish, Edward. Thank you, Mr. Gordon. I am sorry to have kept you waiting. Pray drive on."

James did drive on, with a sarcastic turn of the lip, and a gesture of disgust, for which Gabrielle felt herself at a loss to account. Mr. Edgecumbe stood at his gates, surrounded by his children, watching the carriage out of sight. Mrs. Edgecumbe was looking back, kissing her hand, and smiling. What could there be in all this, to irritate James?

"Gabrielle, I beg your pardon!" said he, suddenly, after a long pause: "I verily believe that I have not spoken since we left the Vicarage. How any such inattention should be possible, in your presence, must remain an eternal mystery——"

"James," interposed Gabrielle, timidly.

"Gabrielle?"

"I have been wanting to ask you to

give up talking nonsense to me—I mean, paying me compliments, and so on. I don't like it, even in fun. Please, if you can help it, never do it again."

"If I can help it?" repeated James, smiling: "What do you mean by that?"

"Why, I thought—as you are accustomed to so much society, and society where such nonsense is talked—that it might, by this time, have become a second nature with you. And I daresay that girls who are used to it, like it, and would like you all the better for it."

"But girls who are not used to it, dislike it, and would like me all the worse for it. Eh, Gabrielle? I stand rebuked. If you like, I'll make you a promise."

"What promise?"

"Never again to pay you a compliment, unless——"

"Yes?"

“ Unless I mean it.”

“ Thank you,” said Gabrielle, simply.

“ But then, you, on the other hand, must promise not to feel yourself insulted, should you ever happen to be seated between two other young ladies, to each of whom, in turn, I make pretty speeches, while, with you, I am ‘truthful even to bluntness.’ ”

“ On the contrary, I should feel myself intensely relieved, and the other young ladies intensely to be pitied,” said Gabrielle, laughing. “ And now, since you have made this promise, I should like to ask you a question.”

“ Ask it. But first observe my faithfulness. I don’t say, Ask it, I shall esteem it an honour to answer any question of yours. Or—Ask it, your slave is at your feet. Or anything sweet of the kind ; but simply, Ask it.”

“ Yes, I see you can keep your word !

Will you tell me what you meant last night, when you said—or, at least, when you implied—that my voice was a power?”

The light, half-satirical mood gave way. He became grave at once, and earnest.

“First, will you tell me why the art of singing well should not be a power,—any more than the art of writing, painting, acting well?”

“I have always thought of singing—unprofessional singing—as a mere accomplishment,” said Gabrielle.

“And what is the use of accomplishments?”

“What is their use? They are amusing——”

“Well?”

“They help to fill up spare time; they make home happy; they refresh one, after harder work.”

“Yes, quite true. So much for accom-

plishments. Now put that term out of your head, and look at the subject in another light. We were speaking of singing. There are some who sing better than others; whose voices are, uncultivated, what the generality of voices would not be, after years of training. Why is this?"

"They were created so."

"Exactly. It is a gift, a talent. Now are not the mediocre voices fully capable to supply the ordinary requirements of society—to amuse, as you said, to heighten home happiness, and the rest? Of course they are. Indeed one seldom hears a voice that is not mediocre, or little better."

"Well?"

"Well, from this fact I deduce the maxim, that, while minor talents may lawfully rest contented with minor ends, higher talents should make it their business to aim at higher ends:—the highest. The common-

place should be left to the commonplace. Otherwise the inferior work is overdone, overrated, and the superior work is not done at all. The majority can't do it; the others won't."

James had stirred himself up into something that was almost excitement. He gave vent thereto by lashing, first one, then the other, of the ponies, who forthwith, not inexcusably, proceeded to resent the same; tossing their heads, throwing up their hind legs, and starting off in a furious gallop. Their master was obliged to exert some strength in restoring order. This cooled him, and, the ponies propitiated, he turned to Gabrielle with a smile.

"Well, now, Gabrielle, to descend from generals to particulars. Your own voice is not one of the mediocre voices; therefore, you should pitch its standard on the mountain, not in the valley. You should aim,

for example, at things beyond the reach of my sister Marian ; who can sing prettily and sweetly, can keep a part, and can entertain visitors—no more.”

“What are those things?”

“A little thought will soon show you. The influence of music is a hackneyed subject, and I can say nothing more about it than has been said already, over and over again. But every year of my life I am more deeply convinced that it really does exist—that good music does or may act with a practical power, upon certain minds. It is for voices like yours, Gabrielle, to speak to such minds—to interpret to them such music. And you do not know what, by a right and studious use of this faculty, you may awaken—what of greatness, what of inspiration !”

Gabrielle was silent ; but the colour flashed up into her face.

"Well!" said James, after another long silence, "I shall take a great interest in your singing-lessons. I believe you will enjoy them. Yates is a clever fellow."

"Is he very impatient? I hope not."

"He can be very impatient on occasion. But I don't fancy he will be so with you. I should think you would make a pleasant pupil, Gabrielle. Your interests are so easily quickened; and, somehow or other, you have the knack of throwing yourself into what one says, in a manner, to say the least, flattering. I feel a strong inclination to teach you something myself. What is there, besides singing, that you would like to learn?"

"You have so little time," said Gabrielle, hesitating.

"Oh! never mind that. I have time for whatever I wish to do."

"There is one thing that I do very much

want to learn ;—the organ. But I hardly like to take you at your word."

"The organ? Hurrah!" cried James. "Just what I should have chosen, supposing—as I rather hoped—that you had left the choice to me. Very well, Gabrielle; we will meet in the chapel every day, at six o'clock P.M. That will give us at least half an hour before you go to dress. Also, it is a musical time; and one not liable to be disturbed by visitors. This day month I shall ask which is your favourite master—Mr. Yates or Mr. Gordon. If I were now to inquire what you anticipate on that score, I suppose you would say, 'I don't know'—eh?"

"You had better inquire, and see."

"No, indeed. It will be some time before I hazard such another blow to my *amour propre*!"

CHAPTER VIII.

... What have I with love to do?
Far sterner cares my lot pursue.

WALTER SCOTT.

ARRIVED at Rotherbridge—a prosperous country town, with wide streets and handsome shops,—James bade farewell to the ladies, driving away in solitary glory. Mrs. Edgecumbe and Olivia were soon deep in the mysteries of ribbons, silks, and muslins, and Gabrielle, seated beside them at Bradley's counter, had full leisure to dream, and to ponder her conversational drive. She did not know what it was that made her so much happier than usual to-day, dissipating the ennui, the weary monotony, which had

of late depressed her spirits. She did not try to analyze this sudden gleam of brightness. She only felt that she was anticipating her singing-lessons with great pleasure; and with pleasure still greater, those other lessons, to be given on the chapel organ.

Her thoughts thus agreeably occupied, she sat, for some time, with exemplary patience. But at length she began to weary, and to wish that Olivia would make haste to choose either the blue silk or the gray silk. She was therefore not sorry when a carriage stopped before the door—an open carriage, with a coat of arms on the panel, and two servants in dark livery on the box. From this carriage a lady and a young girl descended, entering the shop. The lady was short, and exceedingly fat; on either side her face, hung profuse ringlets of the true flaxen shade; her eyes were very light and

very large, and her cheeks were very rosy. She walked slowly—sighing now and then—to the counter, and sank into a chair, at a short distance from the Farnley trio. 'Gabrielle heard her ask, in a plaintive voice, addressing her daughter :

“Why are we come, my sweet Euphrosyne? What do we want? You are aware that I know nothing about it.”

Euphrosyne, whose appearance did not quite embody the ideas awakened by her name, for she was all arms and legs, and awkwardnesses, “a growing girl” of fifteen—Euphrosyne, upon this, recalled her eyes, which had been roving towards Gabrielle. She took out a list of commissions, and proceeded to confide them to the shopman in attendance. The lady, meanwhile, unfolded a fan, and made languid use of it, with an abstracted countenance. At this moment Mrs. Edgecumbe and Olivia rose to depart.

Gabrielle was sorry ; she would have liked to see a little more of the new-comers : whom she had watched with an unaccountable interest. And now, as she cast a parting glance in their direction, she perceived that the lady had put down the fan, had raised an eyeglass, and was looking towards herself. Also that Euphrosyne had turned from the shopman, to follow her mother's example.

Mrs. Edgecumbe, in no governed tones, had just been calling upon "Miss Gordon," and "Miss Wynn," to admire some remarkable shawl. This circumstance might have attracted the attention of the neighbouring party ; but why should they appear so strangely curious ? The mystery was soon solved. Before Olivia had taken three steps, the lady rose, bowed slightly, and said in the plaintive voice,

"Pray forgive this intrusion ; but did I not hear the name of Miss Gordon ? and"—

glancing at Gabrielle—"of Miss Wynn?"

Olivia assented, somewhat stiffly. Gabrielle stared.

"Perhaps Miss Wynn will allow me to introduce myself. She may have heard of me from a dear nephew Charles Godfrey—Lady Louisa Pembroke, his mother's only sister."

"Oh! yes," exclaimed Gabrielle, brightening and flushing; "I have heard of you often. You are his godmother, too, I think."

"Excuse me for sitting down—my feelings overpower my strength. Yes, I am his godmother; and this dear girl is his cousin. Shake hands with Miss Wynn, my sweet Euphrosyne. We saw Charlie last week, Miss Wynn, at Oxford. We have spent the last fourteen years abroad; and, unfortunately, before we left England, my poor darling husband disagreed with Charlie's

father ; and, his beloved mother being gone, we lost sight of him for a time. However, I have hunted him out. I love him for his mother's sake. You can imagine a sister's feelings, Miss Wynn. You cannot know them, because—so Charlie tells me—you are an only child. But perhaps you can imagine them ?”

This question, and the inquiring pause which followed, embarrassed Gabrielle. She blushed ; whereupon, for some reason, Lady Louisa's lips parted in a pensive smile.

“I promised that I would lose no time in making your acquaintance. He told me so much about you, and about your poor father's kindness. I have taken Lorton Court, about four miles from Farnley. I shall hope to see you there frequently. It will make me so happy to——But I am keeping you from your cousin. I suppose,

for the present, we had better say adieu."

She bestowed a feeling pressure on Gabrielle's hand ; and so the interview closed. Gabrielle rejoined Olivia at the shop door ; to be questioned—and congratulated.

"You will have abundant opportunity now for meeting Mr. Godfrey. I am so very glad, dear. No doubt James will wish me to call as soon as possible,—etc., etc."

In short, so overwhelming was Olivia's pleasure, that—a fact unparalleled in the annals of her life—she passed, without seeing, the hotel where she and her companions were to lunch.

Some hours afterwards, James Gordon, crossing the street, caught sight of his sister in a shop, and entered. He had finished his business, and he wanted to get home. He should like to know how much longer this dreadful shopping was to last? As he

spoke, his eye wandered to the opposite end of the counter ; where Gabrielle stood. It was strange, he thought—especially after so very brief a separation,—that he should feel such pleasure in seeing her face again.

Olivia was right ; she *was* rather pretty. At any rate, she had something better than mere prettiness. What a radiant smile, as, in answer to a remark of Mrs. Edgecumbe's, she raised her eyes ! And, when she lowered them, how well that meditative air became her ! Yes, certainly—sometimes—in expression—it was almost a beautiful face.

“ Gabrielle had a pleasant surprise this morning,” said Olivia : while he lingered, leaning against the door-post, silently gazing into that far corner of the shop : “ A Lady Louisa Pembroke, a relation of that young Mr. Godfrey—you remember Mr. Godfrey ? ”

Yes, James remembered. As Olivia spoke, a faint shadow stole over his mind : another

remembrance,—why so unpalatable?—of something that Mr. Lascelles, his co-executor, had said, months ago, in the study at Eversfield.

“Well! What of him?” asked James, withdrawing his eyes from the far corner, and looking out into the street.

“Nothing of him—did you not hear? We only encountered his aunt; and—think how nice for Gabrielle! She is living at Lorton.”

“Why particularly nice for Gabrielle?”

“She will meet Mr. Godfrey there, stupid boy.”

“And what of that?”

“James! Surely you know! There is evidently an attachment between them. No one who saw him when she was ill, could doubt it on his side; and no one who heard Gabrielle talk of him, could doubt it on hers. Indeed, from all I have observed, I

feel certain that he is only waiting for his ordination, to declare himself. And very delightful it will be, dear child, to have her settled for life at Meddiscombe."

"How you run on, Olivia! You are a true woman:—always jumping to conclusions, and always thinking about love."

"But, James, indeed—I have excellent reasons: let me tell you—— Where are you going, James?"

"To fetch the carriage. We should have started an hour ago!"

And before his sister, taken by surprise, could say anything more, he was half-way down the street.

What folly, to be sure! Olivia was as romantic as a school-girl. And yet—— But no,—the idea was too absurd! Though wherein this extreme absurdity might consist, James did not stop to determine.

"What a nuisance love is?" he said to

himself, as he strode on at a furious pace. "I abhor the whole thing from my soul. If Cupid were a reality, and I had him here, I would blow out his brains. Confound it all!"

Those who marvelled at the grayness of James Gordon's head, as compared with the greenness of his shoulders, would have marvelled less, had they seen him at this moment; perhaps, even, would have begun to question whether indeed such grayness existed. A gleam of the natural fire of his five-and-twenty years, was flashing, for once in a way, from the recesses where that fire usually slumbered. He did not look at all like a philosopher, as he entered the inn-yard.

But the gleam soon died out; the calmness and self-restraint returned. He ordered the carriage; then relapsed into a more meditative mood.

"I don't see what concern it is of mine—"

he soliloquized—"to provoke me so absurdly ! But, certainly, it seems ten thousand pities, for a girl of that sort—able, as I could not have believed, in a girl,—to appreciate higher things, to go and spoil all by settling down, so early, into a commonplace domestic character ; to live only for her husband and her children, and her household affairs, to the end of the chapter. I had begun to feel some slight interest in her, some desire to help in the development of her mind. Yes—ten thousand pities it would be ! However, I trust that it is only one of Olivia's little romances. She may be right, indeed, so far as Godfrey goes—boys of his age are such asses !" (The gulf which divided James from this asinine age was exactly two years in width !) " But if Gabrielle return it, I am disappointed in her : that's all."

Thus when, a quarter of an hour later, Gabrielle resumed her place in the carriage, she

found James's humour considerably changed; and that not for the better. He was moody and abstracted; neither, until the drive was half over, did he evince any desire to second her attempts at conversation. Then, looking fixedly at the off pony's head, he remarked:

"You met an old friend at Bradley's, I hear?"

"Not an old friend. Only a relation of an old friend."

He glanced at her as she spoke, and saw that her countenance did not change. No blush, no emotion of any sort, was visible. He began to hope that he might not have to be so very much disappointed, after all.

"I met Charlie Godfrey's aunt. You have heard of Charlie Godfrey? He lived at Eversfield for years, and we are quite like brother and sister. So of course I am glad to make his aunt's acquaintance."

"Yes, naturally. Olivia must call on her," said James; and Gabrielle could not but observe the sudden geniality of his manner. She felt equally at a loss to account for the cloud and for its removal; but she rejoiced to see sunshine once more; and all went "merry as a marriage bell," during the remainder of the drive.

"You are beginning to get on better, dear, with James," remarked Olivia, the same evening.

"Yes," was Gabrielle's sole reply. She sat looking dreamily into the fire, with folded hands; from which the book that she had been reading had fallen unnoticed, sliding down upon the hearthrug.

"He has promised to teach me the organ. Is it not kind in him?" she said, some twenty minutes later, her attitude unchanged.

"In whom?" inquired Olivia. Since that gentle little Yes was spoken, she, in spirit,

had wandered far and wide—to the schools, to the cottages, to the Vicarage, to her absent sisters. Thus the “him” was somewhat incomprehensible.

“I was speaking of James,” said Gabrielle, as she stooped to pick up her book.

“JAMES!” cried Olivia, breathlessly—
“JAMES has promised to teach you the organ?”

“Yes. It was quite his own proposal,” answered Gabrielle; feeling rather guilty, as she saw Olivia’s extreme astonishment.

“Well, if he proposed it, he means it,” Olivia returned, tatting fast. “And I am sure I am very glad; he works his brain so hard, and this will be some recreation for him. But, Gabrielle, if you knew him better, you would agree that his proposing such a thing is most extraordinary. He is usually so entirely wrapped up in his own pursuits. Perhaps, though, he means to

turn over a new leaf, and to be more sociable."

It seemed so indeed. From this time forward, James bestowed a good deal of his company on Olivia and Gabrielle. He seldom, certainly, appeared in the morning; but, after luncheon, he walked or drove with them; and his evenings, when he did not dine out, were invariably spent in the drawing-room. Gabrielle soon learned to anticipate these evenings, as the pleasantest part of the day.

The organ lessons were also a source of great enjoyment. The first of these took place on the day after the drive to Rotherbridge. It was growing dusk when Gabrielle followed James down the stone-flagged passage to the chapel. The angels standing beside the organ held in each hand a wax light, which diffused a faint radiance through the choir; but the rest of the building was in shadow. A feeling of awe crept over

Gabrielle, as she entered the silent aisle, and saw the marble monuments standing out clear and white against the east window—its colours indiscernible now. She would not care, she thought, at this hour of the evening, to be in the chapel alone.

“Gabrielle, I believe you are frightened. Silly child! What is there to hurt you?” said James. “Give me your hand; you might stumble; these steps are rather awkward.”

He took her hand in his, and held it fast; and the awe fled away.

“How could he tell what I was thinking?” she questioned secretly.

“Now will you sit down,” he said, as they reached the organ, “and let me hear you try that first exercise in the book before you? But stop a minute.”

“Why are you waiting?” she asked, after a considerable pause. “I am ready.”

"In one sense, perhaps; but, Gabrielle—"

"Yes."

"What have I done to make you afraid of me?"

This was an unexpected inquiry. Gabrielle glanced at him, met his eyes, lowered her own, blushed, and answered nothing.

"You will neither get on, nor enjoy the lesson, if you are nervous. I shan't lose my patience—are you thinking of that?—or supposing I did, even; would it matter?"

"Not in reality, I daresay," began Gabrielle. Then—as James laughed, quoting under his breath, "Truthful even unto bluntness"—she added, boldly: "I own I do sometimes feel a little—a little dread of you: not fear—it does not amount to fear. But you are so cynical, so quick to see anything which does not come up to your own standard, that I naturally feel rather doubt-

ful as to what you may be satirizing or condemning in me."

"But, Gabrielle,"—and his tone was strangely earnest,—“if I promise that I will never satirize nor condemn anything in you, unless I do so openly, won't you believe it?"

"Yes; but then I shall consider myself equally bound to be open with respect to you," said Gabrielle, suddenly saucy.

"Of course. That is only fair."

And thus the lesson began.

Directly it was over, she ran to her room, and dressed with all possible alacrity. Then, hastening downstairs again, she extinguished her candle, and reopened the baize door which led to the chapel. One moment she paused, irresolute; the next, she stepped into the passage, closed the door, and shut herself in with the darkness. She was determined to conquer that foolish awe which had previously overpowered her—which

had drawn from James the exclamation of, "Silly child!" She groped her way to the chapel door; and here she paused again.

All was very still; the sounds of the household could not penetrate to this retired spot. The wind was sighing down the passage behind her, moaning through the aisle before her, waking unearthly music in the chinks and crannies of the windows. The marble monuments stood out as before; only more weird and ghost-like. Weird and ghost-like, also, when her eye had accustomed itself to the darkness, looked all the rest. Nevertheless she entered bravely, wrestling with the nervousness which continually urged her to turn and fly back to the hall and the light. She advanced towards the chancel—nearer to those awful monuments—nearer to the solemn angels holding the candlestick. Suddenly the baize door swung on its hinges. She start-

ed and trembled. A footstep was approaching, but without a light. Another moment, and her trembling ceased ; she had discerned, had recognised the figure.

"Who on earth is that?" exclaimed James's voice.

"Only I," she answered, smiling to herself.

"Gabrielle! Why!"—and his tone betrayed no small amount of surprise—"you were afraid when it was dusk merely, and when I was with you."

"I know I was afraid ; I wanted to master it, so I thought I would come alone. I will go back now."

"Stop a moment—I'll light a candle. It is not safe for you to be stumbling among these seats alone. I was going to play a little in the dark, till dinner-time. How tiresome these matches are !"

He had struck two or three without suc-

cess; at length one consented to burn. The flickering light revealed Gabrielle, looking almost as white as the monuments; and James, with an unwonted flush on his face, an unusual gleam in his eye.

"Here, let me light you to the hall," said he, taking a candle from its niche.

"Thank you. I am sorry to be so troublesome. I could find my way quite well alone."

James made no answer. He followed her, holding the light on high. At the end of the passage he paused, and said:

"Gabrielle, I liked you before; but now you have made me respect you."

And from this moment he ceased to patronize Gabrielle,—either in manner, in words, or in smile.

CHAPTER IX.

'Tis sin,
 Nay, profanation, to keep in,
 When as a thousand virgins on this day,
 Spring sooner than the lark to fetch in May !

.....
 Come we'll abroad ; and let's obey
 The proclamation made for May,
 And sin no more, as we have done, by staying ;
 But, my Corinna, come, let's go a Maying !

ROBERT HERRICK.

MAY opened for Gabrielle under happier auspices than any previous month of this year. It was a true May Day : hawthorn in the hedges, violets and primroses on the banks ; a cloudless sky, lambs bleating, birds singing. Gabrielle rose early, and sallied forth into the park.

"It is a long time," she said to herself, "since I have been so happy. I feel inclined to skip and run, like those lambs. I wonder whether I could catch one—dear little things! They look so white and pretty. I must really try."

She walked on tiptoe towards a tiny lamb, which had wandered some paces from its companions, and was nibbling at the grass, in happy unconsciousness of her vicinity. She had reached, and in another moment might have touched it, when it lifted its head, took fright, and scampered off at its utmost speed. Gabrielle, impelled by a childish impulse, followed in pursuit; and was only recalled to her senses by a strange hoarse laugh, which made her start, stop short, and look about her.

"Chasing a lamb—haw?" said Mr. Morris, rising from beneath a tree. He held in his hand a large Bible, overflowing with papers:

several of which fell, as he stood up, and fluttered to the grass. Another volume, still larger, lay on the wooden bench where he had been sitting; and a third, a voluminous manuscript, protruded from a pocket of his coat. "Hopeless business. Better give it up. Lambs less easily tired than young ladies!"

He spoke—as he generally spoke—in a gusty, sing-song tone; looking away—far beyond Gabrielle. She was not at first sure that he recognized her.

"I did not really expect to catch it," she said, laughing. "The morning is so lovely; I wanted an excuse for a run."

"Ah! at your age a run is all very well. Glad you have spirits for it. Some time since that has been the case—haw! Won't you sit down?" He moved the great book, and made a place for Gabrielle on the bench; of which, somewhat tired and breathless,

she was thankful to avail herself. Then, having collected his scattered papers, he installed himself at her side. "Some time since that has been the case," he repeated, when he was settled to his satisfaction, his back against the tree. "Your spirits have been low: great languor and depression. Something weighing on your mind—haw?"

"I lost my father barely six months ago," said Gabrielle, her eyes filling.

"Ah! But it is selfish to lament the dead. Happy for them! Happy for them!"

"Surely selfish is too hard a word?" said Gabrielle, gently.

"Well, we won't call it selfish; we'll call it inconsiderate. Short-sighted; the separation is very transient. They leave school, half a year, as it were, before ourselves. We have a few more lessons still to learn. Then we shall leave too."

He paused, and the dreaminess deepened in his eyes.

"But we miss them. Oh, yes, we miss them. We must. That, in itself, is a part of our education. There are alleviations, however. Now you can't think"—and his tone suddenly changed,—“what consolation I find in my Treatise!”

He took the manuscript from his pocket; handling it lovingly. It was closely written, interlined, corrected and re-corrected.

“At least, the Treatise, strictly speaking, I have not yet begun; but the Introduction, as you see, has made some little progress. The Ten Tribes,”—he went on, looking out into the trees: “The Ten Tribes, their possible settlement, their possible posterity, form an absorbing topic for meditation and for research. I had intended, should your melancholy continue, to propose to your consideration some subject of a similar nature.

But you are young ; and there is a wonderful buoyancy, thank God ! in the young. It will not be necessary now."

Once more he paused. Gabrielle saw that he was a little confused ; and more than a little agitated.

"I have been wishing," he added—"I have been wishing, for some days, to speak to you—to ask you——"

"Yes?" she said, after a long interval : during which, to all appearance, he had forgotten that his sentence remained unfinished.

"To ask you," he resumed, with his peculiar start, "about a young man called Godfrey. I heard Miss Gordon mention him, in connexion with you. And I thought—fact is, I knew some Godfreys, once, myself ; I should like to ascertain whether this youth belongs to the family."

"He is the son of a Colonel Godfrey,

who was killed, a long time ago, in India. His grandmother, Lady Godfrey, brought him up; they lived at Eversfield."

"There still?"

"Oh no. Lady Godfrey has been dead some years, and Charlie is at Oxford. He has a nominal home with an uncle, in the vacations; but he will soon be independent. He hopes to be ordained at Christmas; and a living is waiting for him: Meddiscombe—you know it, of course? It is only a mile or two from here."

"Coming to Meddiscombe?—Ah!——"

The pause was very long, this time; and his eyes seemed to have wandered quite beyond this world, and to be looking into the next.

"He has no mother?" came out presently, in an odd jerk.

"No; she died when he was a baby."

"Ah! I knew a Colonel Godfrey, once."

I wonder if it were the same? A harsh man. Harsh and dissipated."

"So was Charlie's father, I fear. I have been told that his mother married out of pique, and did not care for her husband. Anyhow, Colonel Godfrey grew tired of her, and neglected her; and she faded gradually away. She was very pretty, and very young: only one-and-twenty when she died."

"He grew tired of her?—Ah!——"

"Are you ill?" cried Gabrielle, much alarmed: "Shall I run to that cottage and get some water?"

"Thanks," said poor Mr. Morris, struggling for breath; and to the cottage Gabrielle flew. She returned in less than two minutes, with a cracked mug, which she had greatly astonished an old woman by snatching from a table. Mr. Morris drank the greater portion of its contents; the rest he

transferred, in his dreamy manner, to his forehead and his palms. After this he sat down, panted, sighed, patted his chest three times, and was himself again. "Thanks," he repeated—"A spasm. I am subject to spasms. Something connected with the heart, I am told. Sorry to have troubled you. Pray allow me to carry that back."

Still looking out, far away, he extended his hand; and so held it for several moments, as though he expected to receive therein the mug. At length, however, receiving nothing, and conscious, probably, of some degree of exhaustion, he slowly withdrew it; and subsided into reverie. Meanwhile Gabrielle had returned to and from the cottage, had restored the mug, and had pacified the old woman. Now, standing by his side, she offered her arm to conduct him home. Had he not better come at once, and send for the doctor?

"The doctor!" reverberated Mr. Morris, in a stentorian tone. "No, thank you," he added, more quietly; "there is no doctor in this world for me. Your arm!—I should crush you, my dear. No, you've done all you can. Thanks—very many thanks. Go to your breakfast. We shall meet in the chapel, presently Ask you more another time, if you'll let me, about young Godfrey. Just now I am too weak for anything but my Bible and the Treatise."

Too weak for Charlie Godfrey, and yet not too weak for the Treatise! Gabrielle walked slowly homewards, pondering this problem. She was pondering it still, when she arrived within sight of the house, and her attention was diverted by certain strains—proceeding, apparently, from the united efforts of a fiddle, a flute, and an accordion. Quickening her pace, she reached her destination only just in time to avoid entangle-

ment among a little throng of people who had marched from the village to pay their May-Day devours to the "Squire." James and Olivia were waiting, ready to receive them, upon the steps; and in the background crowded the servants, peering over one another's shoulders, eager to get a glimpse of the May Queen. The May Queen was not, however, the most conspicuous object in the procession. That honour was reserved for the May-pole—a huge mass of green, with a flag and a gay knot of ribbons streaming from the summit. The May Queen stood beneath it, suffused in blushes, a little oppressed, apparently, by the weight of her hawthorn crown. She was a modest-looking girl, a beauty in her way, as was undoubtedly the opinion of the young man at her elbow; whom Gabrielle recognised as one of the under-keepers. Proud and pleased, in the last

degree, he appeared ; casting towards her continual glances of exulting admiration, which did not escape the spectators on the steps. Gabrielle heard James, in a contemptuous undertone, observe : “ Poor Rogers !—he is very far gone !”

“ Their banns are to be published next Sunday, I hear. How happy they both seem,” said Olivia.

“ Quite delightful, isn’t it ?” returned James, with a shrug of his shoulders.

Then he turned to Gabrielle, and directed her attention to the contortions which accompanied the minstrelsy ; to the frowns of the man with the fiddle, the cheeks of the man with the flute, the sentiment of the man with the accordion. Gabrielle laughed, but—she hardly knew why—she felt as though a cloud had passed over her spirit.

A mighty voice now struck up a song, which had been composed for the occasion ;

and the whole party, the May Queen not excepted, joined in the chorus with overpowering zeal.

“Coom ! let us hail t' meonth o' May,
Wi' jollity and glee !
Sweet Nature smoiles ter see this day,
And sooa maun we.
T' lombs is skipping i' t' fields,
T' skoylark's soaring hoigh abun us,
To wheer t' soon, wi' koindly oies,
Casts doon a shoining look upun us.
Chorus—Coom, &c.

“We'll let dissensions be, awhoile,
And put us' troobles boy ;
This day we'll rescue out o' toil
And spend i' joy.
We'll crown us' Queean, and set her throoan
Beneath t' May-pole's friendly shadder ;
And then we'll dance, and every step
Shall mak' us' hearts and voices gladder.
Chorus—Coom, &c.

“God bless us' Squoire, and all as live
Within these anshyant walls,
And health and wealth for ever give
To Farnley's halls !
And mony Mays may ye behooald,
And mony toimes, i' bliss unoitng,
Yer voices wi' us' chorus join,
To koindliness and mirth invoiting !
Chorus—Coom, &c.”

The song finished, every eye was fixed upon James: who, stepping forward, proceeded to deliver the speech which was evidently expected of him. He begged to thank all present, in his sister's name and in his own, for the honour of this annual visit, and for their kind wishes. He expressed his satisfaction in the observance of the good old customs—an observance which served to link past and present together, and to foster national and neighbourly feelings. He spoke of the pleasure he experienced in beholding so many “old familiar faces;” and of his hope that these faces might long continue to brighten the May Day festivities. Finally, he praised the song and the singing, and congratulated the company generally, on their taste in the selection of their queen; and he trusted that Her Majesty would condescend to accept from him the gift of a gown—

might it become her only half as well as the crown which she wore at present !

This oration was followed by vigorous cheers for "t' Squire;" and afterwards for "Miss Gordon," and "t' yoong leddy." Rogers was then beckoned to James's side, and entrusted with the wherewithal for the purchase of the gown : as also with a larger sum, to be divided among the mayers. They departed, well-pleased, in procession, as they had come ; the music resounding in their wake.

"Now, I shall be by no means averse to some breakfast," said James, entering the house. "Gabrielle, how did you like the song? It was composed by our poet laureate—alias, the carpenter—alias, the man with the accordion."

"I could hardly understand the jargon of it," said Gabrielle.

"I won't have you call my beloved Yorkshire tongue a jargon," replied James, proceeding to quote:—

'The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yestreen ;
The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour has been ;
The mother may forget the child
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee ;
But I'll remember thee, *Yorkshire*,
And a' that thou hast done for me !'

To go to another subject, Gabrielle? Are you fond of school-feasts?"

"Very *indeed*," said Gabrielle, emphatically.

"There will be one this afternoon, on the green."

"Of James's giving," added Olivia.

"Oh, may I play with the children?" cried Gabrielle—so earnestly, that both her cousins laughed.

"Certainly, Gabrielle ; your presence will do them infinite honour," said James. "And,

if you like, I'll send into Rotherbridge for a doll and a Noah's Ark, and a top or two, wherewith you can solace yourself here, when the feast is over, and your play-fellows are gone."

"Now, James," interposed Olivia; "that is not fair. She ought not to be teased for taking interest in a good cause. I would far rather see her enthusiastic about it, than like Miss Featherstone. Do you remember how bored Miss Featherstone seemed last year? I quite repented of inviting her."

"Ay, but Gabrielle and Miss Featherstone are two. Olivia, what do you say to a ride this morning? I feel in a lazy humour; and I don't see why, for once, I should not indulge it—the day being May Day, and the weather May weather."

"I can't possibly go out myself before luncheon," said Olivia. "But take Gabrielle. A ride will do her good."

"Thank you," said Gabrielle. "I am very sorry—I don't ride."

"Don't ride?" exclaimed James. "Why? Do you dislike it?"

"Oh! no. I should like it, I am sure; but I can't. I have never had an opportunity. Excepting that once, for a month, when I was ill, John Lee lent me his old donkey."

"And you would not condescend to be my pupil in another branch of art?" said James, smiling. "Because, if you would, we have a superannuated pony, just the thing for you to begin upon."

Olivia stared, and Gabrielle protested that she could not think of giving so much trouble.

"There would be no trouble in the case," returned James. "I should simply, two or three times, walk by the pony's side, until you knew how to manage him; and then, two or three more times, ride by his side,

until I could trust you alone. That, in such weather, would be pleasure, not trouble. So don't refuse for my sake."

Gabrielle, thus pressed, glanced towards Olivia; but Olivia was stooping to pick up her handkerchief. At this moment the butler happened to enter, and James ordered the pony.

"Then that is settled, Gabrielle," he said, as Wilcox retired. "You and I are going a maying, like the rest of the world."

Gabrielle remembered all that Olivia had told her of the immensity of James's business; and she felt herself exceedingly guilty. To divert attention from the riding-lesson, she related the history of Mr. Morris's sudden attack; which the episode of the mayers had, until now, driven from her mind. Her cousins, somewhat to her surprise, listened with perfect composure. They assured her that these "spasms" were of frequent oc-

currence, and apparently harmless; leaving no ill effects. Shortly afterwards the prayer-bell rang, and the trio repaired to the chapel. Mr. Morris appeared in his usual place, conducting the service with as strong a voice, as gusty a delivery, as ever; and Gabrielle's uneasiness on his account, vanished in thin air.

"James," said Olivia, when prayers were over, and Gabrielle was gone to equip herself in an old riding-habit of Marian's—"James, you have been very kind in attending to what I told you about Gabrielle, and you have done her great good; and I think, now——"

"What did you tell me about Gabrielle?—and when?" asked James, evidently in the dark.

"Why, don't you remember? I thought it was that which had made you take such pains lately to please her. Don't you remember my begging you to go into the

drawing-room and try to cheer her up? I was about to say, there can be no further occasion, now that she is better and happier—dear child!—for you to spend so much time on her. Unselfish as you are, James, I know that you must feel these constant attentions a burden.”

“Does Gabrielle feel them a burden?” was James’s sole reply.

“Gabrielle! How could she?”

“When Gabrielle feels them a burden they shall cease,” responded James, and turned away.

Olivia was considerably mystified; but she said no more: going meekly upstairs to inspect the fit of Marian’s habit.

Somewhat formidable, in Gabrielle’s eyes, appeared the pony, when, descending, she found him saddled and bridled at the hall door; albeit that, never vicious, he was now, as James had said, superannuated, being

very old, and a little blind, and entirely devoid of spirit. But Gabrielle was not sufficiently experienced to discover all this at first sight; and he was, for a pony, tall—much taller than John Lee's donkey. Moreover, he had a habit of pawing the ground—a remnant of olden times: and in this habit he was indulging, when Gabrielle reached the door. Her courage, at no time physically high, sank—as Wilcox approached with a chair, and James inquired if she were ready—to an unusually low ebb. She would not, however, for the world, have confessed her fears,—weak and foolish as she knew them to be. And when she was fairly installed in the saddle, while James, correcting some defect in her method of holding the reins, stood at her side, the fears began to melt. She soon felt as much at home with the pony, as she had felt with the donkey, in days gone by.

The first twenty minutes were occupied in instructions of an equestrian nature; the pony maintaining a leisurely walk, with which James kept pace. Presently they came to anchor under an elm, in a retired lane. Here the pony resorted to such quiet grazing as circumstances would allow; and James, taking off his hat, reclined against the bank, on the summit of which grew the tree. In the air floated innumerable insects, with a continuous drowsy hum. An odour of violets came from the hedge-row; a thrush was singing in a neighbouring coppice; in distant fields lambs were bleating, cattle were lowing; farther still, a boy was calling to the birds that flocked about the young corn. The peaceful English prospect—dales and uplands, abundant in spring tints, a silver thread of a river, here and there a church steeple, a farmhouse, a cluster of cottages, all etherealized

in the gray morning haze—formed a fair picture. And to this picture, James, as he leant against the bank, his eyes—somewhat uplifted—glowing with that half-inspired expression which came over them at times—was no unworthy adjunct. Neither, indeed, was Gabrielle; for, although not beautiful, her face was yet so fair, so fresh, so sweet, and many an established belle might have been thankful to possess her supple figure and girlish grace.

So thought James; while she, all unconscious, sat looking out over the landscape, thinking how lovely it was, how sweetly the thrush sang, how much lay around her for which to rejoice, to thank God!

“I am sorry,” she said, “that weather like this comes so seldom, and lasts so short a time. There is something so elevating in it—something that makes one so much better, so much happier!”

“Happier, perhaps: better—that I doubt. To me, now, this weather is enervating, not elevating. I feel indisposed to exertion, tempted to sink into a state of passive enjoyment—a *dolce far niente*, which would soon send all higher faculties to sleep.”

“Do you? Well, I daresay that such beauty and serenity for a long time together would not be good. Still, for the time we have it, I think it does elevate rather than lower. At least,” she said, in a lower tone, “it does with me. It draws me nearer God.”

“How?”

“It makes me think of Him, and thank Him for giving us so many beautiful things, and hearts to enjoy them. And then, this season always seems a type of Heaven, of the Resurrection,” added Gabrielle, colouring.

“Well, that may be all very true,” said James, after a pause of some minutes; “but,

to me, the expression 'near God,' necessarily implies some participation, however slight, in the Divine nature. The nearer that any man, morally and intellectually, approaches towards perfection, the nearer also he approaches towards God. Now, no perfection, moral or intellectual, can be attained without strong effort; which, in its turn, requires strong mental energy. Therefore, whatever tends to diminish mental energy, must also tend to increase our distance from perfection; and consequently from God. All this seems too grandiloquent, perhaps, for our present subject; but I am certain that the surest road to success in the attainment of any aim, lies in pursuing that aim in little things, as in great things—in never, for one instant, losing sight of it. And, thus, this languid pleasure, the effect of the weather, is, to my mind, rather degrading than otherwise. It is a pleasure, moreover, which we

share with the brutes,—with these midges even !”

“But the midges cannot feel grateful,” said Gabrielle ; “they cannot rise, through its means, to higher things. They enjoy the sunshine as sunshine, the physical comfort as physical comfort, and no more.”

“Yes, our enjoyment is superior to theirs in degree ; but I doubt if it be much so in kind. However, Gabrielle, you mustn’t set me down as a misanthrope. I believe pleasure in moderation to be beneficial—harmless, at any rate. Besides, it is not for all to aim at that perfection for which effort so unbending is required. Many—the majority—have no desire to surpass their fellow-men ; and let those enjoy themselves, luxuriate, as they will. But the few who set their standard higher, must climb higher, as I have remarked to you before.”

Gabrielle made no answer. She felt mys-

tified, though not convinced. Her silence passed unnoticed by James, who was absorbed in his own thoughts.

“Give me tempestuous weather,” he said, after a while—“roughness, literally and figuratively. With opposition rises strength—the more of difficulty, the more of glory. To press through, come what may, to reach the calm above—that is a worthy ambition. For that a man may well sacrifice all else—all which would hinder him, or lead him to rest satisfied with anything lower.”

His dark eyes shone, as by some hidden fire; his face flushed; he rose unconsciously to his full height, as though he saw a host of foes in tangible form before him, and were resolved to oppose them—to the death even.

Gabrielle was astonished. This glimpse into his inner life startled, almost alarmed her. She did not know what to make of it; moreover, it appeared so strange a contrast

to his outer life, to all that she saw of him day by day: to his agreeable manner, his easy smile, his coolness and equanimity. She sat meditative and perplexed, with a vague consciousness that there was, somewhere, something mistaken in his ideas; yet also something noble, something higher than in those of the generality of people.

Meanwhile, her steed had tired of grazing, and had resorted to his trick of pawing the ground. James, recalled thereby to sublunary things, proposed that the cavalcade should move on. Then, quite his usual self again—Gabrielle assenting—he adjusted her bridle, and led the pony back into the road.

CHAPTER X.

What prudence with the old and wise :
 What grace in youthful gaities ;
 In all how sage !

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

PROCEEDING down the lane, they presently encountered an old man, mounted on a spirited horse, and followed by a bevy of dogs. He wore a buff coat and waistcoat, light coloured cords, gaiters, and huge hobnailed boots. His face was hard and stolid : the complexion weather-beaten ; the blue eyes small and keen ; the forehead knotty, bordered on either side by tufts of thick gray hair. The features might have been carved from some rugged rock upon his native moors.

On perceiving James, he drew in his horse, and raised his brown straw hat. No smile, no change of any kind, relaxed the rigid countenance. But a certain rough courtesy lurked in his manner, as he turned to Gabrielle, and acknowledged her presence by a bow.

"O wor boun' ta t' Park, sir, ta speak ta yersen. Doctor says as ma lad can't last mooch longer. Not as o thinks owt ta wot doctor says! but o can see wi' me oies. An' he'd loik ta see yer afoor he gooas; soo' o thout o'd let yo knooaw."

"I'll try to get over to-morrow, Holt. Does he suffer much?"

"He dooan't suffer mooch wi' pain, loike; it's wakeness an' t' cough. An' he wiern't lig i' bed. He wur allus a outdooar lad; an' o' days loike thissen, e can't keep him i' t' house. He's gi'en a deal o' trooble i' s'

toime, but that's all o'er. O maun let bygones be bygones, o reckon."

"You'll not repent it, Holt, when he's gone."

"Mebbe not, as ta t' lad. But if e ever gets hooald o' them as has led him astroy, o'll serve 'em out, an' nooa mistake—sooa e will! Only they'd a let him be, he'd a lived ta shoot ma oies, as he oughter, an' takken t' farm efther me, as o did ether ma feyther. An' nah, he's a wasting an' a wasting! If e could, o'd sap t' loives o' their lads, as they've sapped t' loife o' moine. O'll ne'er forgi' 'em."

James shook his head.

"You will feel differently, in a few months' time, Holt," said he. "That way of thinking is not right. We'll talk it over to-morrow."

"All t' talking i' t' universe wiern't change me, sir. Nobbut wot ye'r welcome ta say

wot ye've a moind to say. O'm deeply in debted ta yer, Mester Gordon. If it hadn't a been for yo, he'd happen never a sin's whooam again. Sooa yo'll coom to-morrow, an' good day ta yer, sir. Good-day, miss."

Setting abrupt spurs to his horse, the old man wheeled round, and rode rapidly away, in the direction from which he had come; pursued by the dogs, all barking—and a cloud of dust.

"That's a curious old specimen of humanity," said James, looking after him: "There is something grand about him, too—something above the average. I can't help rather admiring that unrelenting spirit, though I feel myself in duty bound to preach its enormity, as best I can."

"Poor old man—I pity him so very much!" cried Gabrielle: "How I wish I could do something to comfort him!"

“My dear Gabrielle,” said James, with a smile, “the comfort for which he is thirsting, is beyond your comprehension. In his present state, nothing short of revenge would be any comfort to him. And, indeed, I can scarcely wonder. I never knew a finer young fellow than that son of his, a year or two ago. But he was weak, and flush of money, and he got among bad company, who enticed him into ways of gambling and drinking, and a good deal besides. At last he became entangled in a poaching row, and was sent to jail. Now old Holt looks upon the game laws as fully equal, if not superior, to the Ten Commandments; it was something of the Brutus feeling, I fancy, that made him disown his son forthwith. He even refused to pay the fine; the poor fellow had to serve out his month on the treadmill. Afterwards, he grew reckless, and went from bad to

worse. I fear that the life which he has been leading at Rotherbridge would not bear examination."

"And you reconciled him to his father. I don't wonder they are grateful."

"Grateful!" said James, smiling carelessly. "Is it not a Squire's business to promote peace, so far as he has opportunity, among his tenants? It was rather hard work, though, in this instance. I thought that old man's stolidity would never give way. But it gave way at last. Can you fancy him, Gabrielle, bowing his head on the table, and sobbing like a child?"

"Oh, did he?"

"He did, indeed. . You are getting melancholy, though; we'll change the subject. Look at that butterfly. What a splendid fellow!"

But Gabrielle scarcely raised her eyes.

"I can't throw off things all in a minute,"

she said. "And it is so very sad. Can nothing be done for them?"

"Nothing more than has been done. The young man must die; and the old man must lament him: these are inevitable facts. Why, the world is full of such tragedies. If you take them all to heart in this way, you may as well determine to 'never smile again.'"

Gabrielle was silent.

"You think me unfeeling," pursued James. "But, depend on it, pity, where pity is unavailing, deteriorates the mind. You should read what Abercrombie says about that, in his 'Moral Feelings.' There are no people on earth so practically selfish as those tender individuals, whose compassions are always being moved by imaginary ills, or by ills impossible to relieve."

"I think you are rather like old Holt,"

exclaimed Gabrielle, more vindictively than James had ever heard her speak.

He laughed, and demanded to know wherein the resemblance consisted.

"You are hard," she returned. "What you say is true ; but you say it coldly. You want softness. And you will get it, I hope, some day."

"By having a son like Anthony Holt, to drink and poach, and wear the life out of me, till my gray hairs come with sorrow to the grave? Thank you, Gabrielle. When that catastrophe befalls me, you will know that your kind wishes have helped to bring it about."

He looked at Gabrielle ; but Gabrielle would not smile. No, after all—he was not her ideal hero ! He might be *sans peur* ; but, with this lack of tenderness, he could never be *sans reproche*.

So she thought for the space of ten min-

utes ; or, perhaps, of a quarter of an hour. After that, his imperceptible efforts to restore her equanimity ; his gentleness, when he corrected certain defects in her riding ; his agreeableness, as he passed to the discussion of other topics ; and—must it be admitted ?—his handsomeness not the least : united to dissipate the cloud,—and he became her Admirable Crichton once more.

In the afternoon, Olivia and Gabrielle repaired to the village green ; which, be it observed, was a model green, fashioned, under James's directions, from the remains of an old common. He had collected every characteristic by which, in fiction, if not always in real life, the village green, time out mind, has been distinguished. The pool "gabbled o'er by noisy geese ;" the tree, encircled by the wooden seat ; the well, with its wooden bucket ; the broad expanse of turf, where "the playful children, just let

loose from school," might scamper at will : all were here.

And here, on this afternoon, the May-pole stood, with a flowery throne for the May Queen ; while around, about—here, there, and everywhere—were scattered, in holiday attire, the country people. Among them, certain young men, about to compete in athletic sports, strutted, minus coat and waistcoat : or, the admiration of all beholders, practised leaps and races, in parties of two and three. The schoolmaster, also master of the ceremonies, was bustling to and fro ; shouting directions to a humble satellite, who was engaged in the measurement of distances, and in the adjustment of various knotty points connected with the games. Hard by was a large white tent, a Union-Jack flying from the top, and at the entrance a placard, advertising Ginger-beer, Lemonade, and Refreshments. The minstrels

of the morning sat within, and emitted strains more mirthful than harmonious ; and, keeping time to these strains, the school-children, when Olivia and Gabrielle appeared, were marching in procession towards a row of tables laden with cake and cans of smoking tea.

“Now, Gabrielle, which will you do—wait on the children, or walk about?”

“I would rather go first to the children. What a pretty sight ! It reminds me of the May Day in ‘Bracebridge Hall.’”

“Every one seems so happy—that is the best of it. Oh ! there are the Edgescumbes ! Make haste, Gabrielle. I must get Mr. Edgescumbe to say grace.”

Long rows of boys and girls, clean and smiling—mugs in their hands, and expectation in their faces—were awaiting Olivia. Grace said, they established themselves on the grass, and the important business began.

Gabrielle pulled off her gloves, looped up her dress, and went to work with right good will. Which of the three were the greater child might well be doubted, as, a glow on her cheek, a sparkle in her eye, she helped two little Edgecumbes to carry about a huge basket of cake; they supporting one handle, and she, with considerable effort, the other.

While this process was enacting, James came up from behind, and paused, standing beside Olivia.

"It does one good to watch her," he said, presently. "How thoroughly she throws herself into the fun of the thing!"

"Who?" inquired Olivia.

"Who? Why, Gabrielle, of course. Oh! how are you, Mrs. Edgecumbe? I beg your pardon, I did not see you. What a beautiful day!"

"It is indeed. The air is so mild—we

ventured to bring all the children : even your godson, Mr. Gordon."

"Ah ! exactly," said James, abstracted. His eyes had returned to Gabrielle. Mrs. Edgecumbe, a little piqued, fell back on Olivia, who proved a more sympathetic listener.

"Shall I help you, Gabrielle?"

She turned her head, and saw, close at her elbow, James.

"Oh ! no, thank you—Mary and Fanny are helping me. This is such fun ! What do you think?—that child in the blue pinafore has devoured six pieces already, and is beginning a seventh."

"You don't maintain strict discipline. You should limit them."

"Oh ! no, that would be a shame. Unless you have an eye to economy?"

"Don't think to wound me, Gabrielle, by your insinuations—they are beneath my

notice. Look at that anxious cormorant—and that, and that.”

“I must go to them. Mary, those little boys want some cake.”

And away once more she started ; while James still followed her with his eye.

A carriage—an open barouche—rolled up in the rear. James was conscious of a flutter of muslins, light mantles, parasols ; and heard a bland voice exclaim—

“ Oh ! Miss Gordon, here you are ! How delightfully innocent ! ”

Turning, he saw that the carriage contained a party of their county neighbours : to wit, Mrs. Featherstone, an elderly lady ; Miss Theodosia Featherstone, a young lady ; Captain Featherstone, an officer with an eye-glass ; and Miss Carew, Captain Featherstone's betrothed.

“ You here too, Mr. Gordon ? Dear me ! I must get out, and look about me. And so

will you, Jane, my dear, won't you? And The? Yes, The will, I know."

Then forth stepped Mrs. Featherstone, from her place in the crowded carriage, and landed herself upon the grass at Olivia's side. Mrs. Featherstone was short and stout, with a large aquiline nose; and a minute pair of eyes, which were constantly moving, or rather running, from thing to thing, from face to face. One glance told her whether its object were ugly or beautiful, "second-rate" or *comme il faut*, well or ill-dressed; and—if that object was feminine—it also told her the price, within a shilling or two, of bonnet, brooch, and gown. Anything deeper, anything higher, fifty, nay, a hundred glances, would not have told her. Her mind dealt only in small matters; but in these it evinced such skill, that—among her female acquaintance, at least—Mrs. Featherstone was regarded with

considerable awe. For the pricks administered by her eyes were as nothing to those shot forth by her tongue ; which, perhaps, seemed all the more formidable for being accompanied by a bland voice, a polished manner, and a singularly suave smile.

Mrs. Featherstone, however, was not the principal person who descended from the carriage. Somebody following her, attracted as much attention, as the company in general were, by this time, receiving from the minute eyes. Theodosia Featherstone—*alias*, The—*alias*, the Bijou—by which latter title she was distinguished in certain London clubs—was externally a Bijou indeed, very small and very beautiful. Perhaps, indeed, artistically viewed, she was almost faultless, in feature and in form : so bright, so soft, was her hair, so brilliant her complexion ; her eyes were of so true a blue, her figure, her feet, her hands, were so perfectly proportioned.

Did the Bijou know that she was a Bijou? Undoubtedly she knew it; she further derived great satisfaction from this knowledge; but she was not particularly vain. It was the satisfaction of the picture-dealer, rather than of the artist. She had been born with a remarkable relish for the comforts and distinctions of this life. To obtain by "a good marriage," an ample share therein, was at the present moment her ambition; an ambition in which she of the minute eyes, fully participated, feeling that, this blessed object attained, her work would be done. For The was her only daughter, and Captain Featherstone, her only son, had already secured unto himself two hundred thousand pounds: of which Miss Carew formed the complement.

"Who"—said Mrs. Featherstone—"Who is that young lady in mourning, so busy among the children? A new face, I think."

"She is a cousin,—a ward of my brother's," replied Olivia.

"Oh yes, by-the-by," cried The, addressing herself to James; "We heard the most charming report of her, the other day. Will you introduce me?"

"Certainly. She is absorbed in tea and cake, you see; but I'll fetch her,"

"Oh! pray don't trouble yourself," exclaimed Miss Featherstone: who, if the truth were known, would greatly have preferred a *tête-à-tête* with James. But he was gone.

"Gabrielle, can you leave this basket to Mary and Fanny? Miss Featherstone—the belle of the West Riding—wishes to be introduced to you."

"To me?" cried Gabrielle, turning, and seeing the new-comers: "Wait one moment; where are my gloves? My hands are all over cake."

"Oh! that's a matter of course," said

James, highly amused: "Come along."

So she went; and was duly introduced to the whole party. Shortly after which she found herself standing with James and Miss Featherstone, a little apart from the rest. The Bijou's loveliness was by no means lost upon Gabrielle. She gazed entranced, and drank it in,—then looked at James; but his face was, as usual, impenetrable.

"We are off to London next week."

"Indeed?" said James.

"Of course you are going?"

"Not *en famille*, this year."

"Oh!"—with a glance at Gabrielle's mourning: "What will Marian and Cissy say to that?"

"Oh, they are all right. They are going with Peers and Annie. I shall probably run up and fetch them home, towards the end of the season."

"Then we *shall* see something of you! I

thought you meant to turn into a recluse."

"Not just yet. The world must disgust me a little more first."

"That's reassuring. I have felt afraid to speak to you lately."

"Indeed! Has any alarming change taken place in my appearance?"

"No; but you are so clever, you know. And everyone is raving about your book."

"Well, what of that?"

"It must make you despise a silly little thing like me!"

"Could any man look at you, and despise you?"

"Ah! you don't deny the fact. And you don't disguise it, either, by asking unmeaning questions."

"How do you know that that question was unmeaning? Can you read my heart?"

"No; and, what's more, I can't read your book. I tried so hard, but the first three

lines were enough. It is too deep for me."

"What a pity I couldn't foresee that! I'd have made it shallower."

"If you would only write a novel, now—"

"With you for the heroine?"

"Don't be nonsensical. Will you write a novel, Mr. Gordon?"

"Some time, perhaps, since *you* ask me, when I have nothing better to do."

"Thank you—how polite! Seriously, though, I shall be proud of your acquaintance next week."

"Thank you—how polite! Seriously, though, are you ashamed of my acquaintance this week?"

"Not exactly; but you're acquainted with everyone here; so there's no distinction in it. Next week I shall be in London, surrounded by people who never heard your name, until you became a lion; and when they rave about you, I shall say—'I know him!'"

—I have heard him roar in private life!"

"Ah! that will be true glory—won't it?"

"I shan't intensify your conceit by saying yes. Why does that bell ring?"

"It is a race-bell. By-the-by, should you like to see a race?"

"Immensely, I should. School-children are so insipid."

James lingered a moment, looking towards Gabrielle.

"Will you come too, Gabrielle?" said he.

Upon this Miss Featherstone also looked towards Gabrielle; and not merely towards her, but at her;—in fact, she stared at her; and Gabrielle, conscious thereof, coloured.

"I think," she said, feeling herself a little *de trop*, "I had better stay with the children."

"That's quite unnecessary," said James: "Besides, you can come back whenever you like."

He stood as if determined not to move,

until she moved likewise. Gabrielle thought it better to be *de trop* than to "make a fuss;" and the trio proceeded towards the more crowded portion of the green.

"Will there be prizes?" inquired Miss Featherstone.

"Yes, dispensed by the May Queen."

"Is the May Queen pretty, this year?"

"I thought so, half an hour ago."

"And why not think so now?"

"She is now eclipsed."

"What will the lion-hunters say, when I tell them of the arrant nonsense which I have heard the lion talk?"

"They will say that your presence is more than sufficient to turn the wisest head. —Well, Tompkins, how are the races going on?"

"Foorst-rate, Squoire," replied the person thus addressed, with a tug at his battered beaver hat: "Yoong Rogers, t'

keeper, has just bet i' t' two moile. They're boun' to joomp i' sacks, ee-now. Ma Dick's along wi' 'em."

"If I remember rightly, your Dick jumped uncommonly well last year."

"So 'e did, Squoire—so 'e did," replied Tompkins, highly delighted.

"You are such a painfully conscientious Squoire, you see," observed Miss Featherstone, laughing, as they moved on: "Paying indiscriminate court all round, and bending to the level of Dicks and Tompkinses, just as you bend to mine. It makes you popular, of course; but is it worth the trouble?"

"Worth what trouble I expend, which is little enough. A pleasant word here and there is easily said. Look! they are beginning the sack-race."

Ten or a dozen youths, tied up to their throats in sacks, were trying, with spasmodic jumps, to gain a post placed at some dis-

tance. This post was surmounted by a hat ; which the successful aspirant was required to dislodge with his teeth. Every now and then, one or two of the competitors overbalanced himself, and fell with a heavy thump ; rolling helplessly, until some friendly stander-by should volunteer to restore him to his feet. Once, in an intricate case, when two had fallen together, and were kicking and plunging, each against each, as best they could, through the sackcloth ; that friendly stander-by, greatly to Miss Featherstone's diversion, was James ; and in the peals of laughter which the whole scene called forth, no voice was more hearty than his own.

“ I believe that, next year, you will jump yourself, Mr. Gordon. Pray congratulate Tompkins ;—his Dick has got the hat. Are you looking for your cousin ? She has vanished. She found us bad company, I fear.”

"Perhaps so," said James, gazing into the distance, in quest of Gabrielle's figure. He spied her out, at length. She was going in the direction of the school-children; leading a little boy by the hand. James suddenly recollected that, some minutes before, he had heard the voice of a little boy, calling Mammy! Mammy! Gabrielle had heard it also, and was restoring him to his Mammy: like a good angel, as she was.

"Do you like her?" inquired Miss Featherstone.

"That is rather a perplexing question. I may not be able, truthfully, to say yes; and yet I could hardly say no."

"Oh yes, you could—to Me," said Miss Featherstone: "Besides, I never tell tales out of school, and I wish to know: what kind of girl is she?"

"You and I are two different people, you see. We might view her with differ-

ent eyes. Far better judge for yourself."

"But I don't know her."

"You will know her, I dare say, sooner or later."

"How provoking you are, Mr. Gordon!"

Miss Featherstone pretended to pout. But James took this with his ordinary nonchalance, making no attempt to excuse himself. They were shortly joined by the rest of the party; and the subject was dismissed.

Half an hour later, Gabrielle, somewhat flushed and wearied, was taking a principal part in a game dear to all Yorkshire children—"Dooch under t' watter kit." Suddenly she heard a whisper of "Yon's t' Squoire!"—and saw James crossing the grass.

"You are tired, Gabrielle," he said, as he reached her: "You must play no longer."

"I choose to play," answered Gabrielle, wilfully, not relishing the tone of command.

He instantly drew back, and Gabrielle

went on playing; but he did not leave the spot.

Presently the game terminated. A little shyly, she stole to his side; and said, drawing on her gloves: "James, I have finished. Do you want me?"

"Not unless you want to come."

"But I do—I am quite ready to come," said Gabrielle.

"I beg your pardon for interfering just now. Of course I have no right to interfere with you. I forgot, at the moment, that you were not one of my younger sisters."

Something in his tone gave Gabrielle a slight pang. She did not like this cold disclaiming of all right. She glanced at him; saw that he was looking quite away from her, into the distance above her; and she bent her head somewhat nervously, over the fastening of her glove.

"Shall I button that?" said James.

"I have done it now, thank you. Are the Featherstones gone?"

"They are with Olivia. I left them to look for you. I thought that you might like to see the prizes given."

"Oh, thank you, James: I should indeed. Shall we go at once?"

"There is no hurry. A bell will ring when the time comes. If you take my advice, you will rest a little, first."

"I shall be very glad to rest," said Gabrielle, anxious to atone: "Now I think of it, I am rather tired."

"Suppose we sit down under that tree, and watch the children play?—an employment after your own heart, I am sure."

Gabrielle smiled: and they went to the tree. "But I shall hear the bell, alone," she said: "Please go to the Featherstones."

"You want to get rid of me, then?"

"Oh no; not unless you wish it. I

only thought you might be staying from politeness, which I should hate."

It was James who smiled now.

"You are most refreshingly simple, Gabrielle," he said: "No, I really would rather stay, if you will have me. I want to talk to you a little. I am tired of talking to Miss Featherstone. Coming from her to you, is like coming from a fountain, sparkling, indeed, but heated by playing in the sun, to a little clear brook which cannot hide so much as a pebble, and which is always cool, because the sunshine falls on it through over-arching boughs."

"James," said Gabrielle, blushing deeply: "You have forgotten your promise."

"What promise?"

"To pay me no more compliments. You know how I dislike them."

"I have not forgotten. But that promise was conditional."

Gabrielle blushed more deeply still.

“I promised that I would never pay you a compliment unless I meant it. I have kept that promise; and I am keeping it now.”

Gabrielle made no reply; but she felt very happy. During several minutes they sat silent, the children playing round them, a bee humming in their ears—the sound of voices, softened by distance, wafted from the other end of the green.

“Gabrielle,” said James, at length, “what do you think of Miss Featherstone?”

“I think she is very pretty—beautiful. The longer that I looked at her, the more I admired her.”

“Yes, she is very pretty, certainly. But that is not the kind of thing I mean. How do you like her in herself? How does she strike you?”

“I have hardly seen enough of her to

say. I shouldn't venture to infer anything positive—good or bad—from the rattling conversation which she was keeping up with you."

"No, it is slightly idiotic in me to ask you such questions, yet. But when you know her better, I should really like to hear what you think. Such eyes as yours are often very clear-sighted."

"What does he mean? Oh, I hope he is not in love with her!" thought Gabrielle.

For Miss Featherstone—beautiful as she was—did not appear to her worthy of her Admirable Crichton.

"No—he cannot love her," she decided, a moment later, calling to mind his simile of the fountain: and her momentary misgivings were appeased.

Meanwhile James sat silent, deep in thought. All of a sudden he gave an impatient start; and his countenance changed,

as though he had just dismissed some unpalatable subject from his mind.

"James—" said Gabrielle, a little timidly, "I have something to ask you,—about your book, the book that Miss Featherstone mentioned. Olivia told me of it, some time ago; and I begged her to let me read it. But she said that she had lent both her copies, and I must go to you for one."

"Well?"

"And—and I did not like to go to you," said Gabrielle, the ready colour rising—"At least, I have been putting it off. But I should be so glad if you would lend the book to me."

"Perhaps you'll agree with Miss Featherstone about it?"

"I am not afraid," said Gabrielle, smiling.

He smiled too, and replied, "Well! you shall have it; but I should like you to read it with an unbiassed mind. Some day I'll

put it on the table, among other new books, and leave you to take it up 'promiscuous,' ignorant of the author."

"Yes, do—that will be fun," said Gabrielle; and at this moment the bell rang.

CHAPTER XI.

With hues of genius on his cheek,
In finest tones the youth could speak :

.
. a youth to whom was given
So much of earth—so much of Heaven.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

OLIVIA and Gabrielle sat together in the drawing-room, Olivia working, Gabrielle reading aloud. The book was "Son and Heir," and Gabrielle was endeavouring to kindle in her cousin something of the enthusiastic admiration with which she herself regarded it. But somehow Olivia would not kindle, and in one of the most pathetic parts she annoyed Gabrielle to the last degree by observing, "Poor

thing!"—at the same time threading her needle.

"Well! if all that you can say, is 'Poor thing!' I see no use in going on," thought Gabrielle; and, having reached the end of a chapter, she closed the book.

At the moment, Olivia made no remark; but shortly afterwards—her needle threaded to her satisfaction, and her seam resumed—she exclaimed,

"By-the-by, Gabrielle, I forgot to tell you—Sarah Jane Tompkins has got the chicken-pox."

The chicken-pox and Sarah Jane Tompkins—after Everard's broken heart! Gabrielle felt too much incensed to reply. She sat silent, resting her chin on her hand. Westward, the sun was setting in all the glory which forms "the shepherd's delight;" and a row of Scotch firs, upon some distant eminence, stood out against that crimson

background, in dark relief. The haze of twilight was stealing over the trees and fields; far away church bells were ringing; from a bush hard by, resounded, now and then, the clear notes of a blackbird.

The pensive calmness accorded well with Gabrielle's frame of mind. She was full of the story which she had been reading: of the glow of joy which irradiates it for a time, of the premature declining of that joy, of the bitter end.

"I know it is only fiction," she said to herself; "it never actually happened. But things equally wretched do happen, every day. There are many Everards and many Sydneys in the real world, who suffer as this Everard and this Sydney suffered, and whose lives, like theirs, are spoilt—through no sin, at any rate, of their own. Somehow, the world, and everything in it, seems

out of order—too much out of order to be ever disentangled.”

For the first time, arose in Gabrielle's heart, the old familiar doubt :

“How can God, Who is so merciful, allow so much of wrong-doing, of suffering? Why is He so silent? Why does he not interfere to set things right?”

She dwelt on this thought for a moment : then passed beyond.

“Is it necessary, after all, that they should be set right here? Is this world, in its present state, the final home of man? And will there not be plenty of time, in the world that is his final home, to remedy everything—to arrange everything? and plenty of room for the forsaken, and the wronged, and the neglected, who had no place on earth—or, having one, lost it?”

She sat and pondered these things, and

the glory died from the sky, and the light waned.

"Gabrielle, you seem in a very meditative mood!" observed Olivia.

"An idle one, too, I fear," said Gabrielle, rousing herself: "Where is my work?"

"Never mind your work, dear. You are tired, no doubt. This weather is so weakening."

"The hottest spring that we have had—I don't know when," said James, entering suddenly. He had been at Rotherbridge all day on magistrate's business. Gabrielle inwardly thanked the twilight for hiding the colour, which the unexpected sound of his voice sent in a flame to her cheek.

"James!" exclaimed Olivia, starting to her feet, "let me ring for your dinner. Why, when did you come in? You are dressed!"

"Thank you, I have had my dinner," said James, laying his hand upon the bell-

rope : "I have been at home half an hour."

"Dinner and dressing both, in half an hour?" cried Olivia, laughing. "What marvellous celerity !"

"Celerity is a virtue," said James, moving to the window where Gabrielle sat, and establishing himself, schoolboy-fashion, on the sill : "Well, Gabrielle, what have you been doing ? I suppose you hardly ventured on a ride ?"

"No," said Gabrielle, with a smiling shake of the head : "But we drove—Olivia and I. Then there was my singing-lesson ; and I sat out a long time reading."

"Well, as for me, I have been hard at work all day. I am by no means sorry to come home and rest. By-the-by, Olivia, I met Holt at Rotherbridge ; his son is dying fast. I must go over and see him to-morrow."

"Poor fellow ! Doubtless the heat has

been to much for him," remarked Olivia : who was stitching ardently, despite the gathering darkness.

"Gabrielle," said James, exchanging the window-sill for an arm-chair, "I should like to ask you a favour."

"Should you? Do ask it, then."

"Yesterday I heard you singing to yourself in the gloaming. Will you sing now to me?"

"I am sure she will; and I'll ring for candles."

James cried out in horror.

"My dear Olivia! Candles? The bare mention of candles dispels the charm. Gabrielle, doesn't it?"

Gabrielle smiled. She sat down at the piano, and sang song after song; and the last faint gleams of daylight faded, and the stars began, one by one, to twinkle into being. While James, lying back in his chair, forgot

his hard day's work ; forgot all that had annoyed him, all that in any way perplexed or disturbed his mind. A sense of entire repose, of peace unbroken, entranced him, heart and soul. Whether or no he were dreaming, he could not tell, but somehow, there seemed at that moment, to be only two people in the world : himself and Gabrielle. Presently—without doubt he was dreaming now—he thought that Gabrielle began to rise, to float serenely into a purer atmosphere, and that, as he looked earnestly after her, he found himself by her side. The air was full of soft music ; from far below, the sounds of earth came in a mighty murmur, etherealized, subdued ; and, thus on and on, they rose—he and she—impelled by some mysterious voice, which cried “ Higher ”—ever “ Higher.”

It was a pleasant vision, but strangely unlike those that usually visited James. He

felt half ashamed of it, when, candles and tea appearing, he opened his eyes in the ordinary world.

"I believe you have been asleep, James," said Gabrielle, with a merry laugh: "I spoke to you five minutes ago, and so did Olivia, but no answer came."

"I beg ten thousand pardons, I'm sure," said James: "And many thanks for your singing. No, upon my honour,"—as Gabrielle laughed again—"I heard the greater part. It was only just at the last that I dozed off." He rose and went to the window: where he stood, absently sipping his tea, and looking out. "I think I shall have a turn on the terrace. Olivia, or Gabrielle, or both, will you come too?"

Olivia replied in the negative, being anxious to finish her work; but Gabrielle declared that—the evening was so close—she should enjoy a turn above all things; she

would fetch her hat. Olivia was insisting that she must also fetch a cloak ; and James, to spare her the trouble, was offering a straw-hat and a plaid of his own, which hung in the hall, when Wilcox entered to announce that Mr. Reynolds, the steward, begged the favour of a few words with his master.

“ Mr. Reynolds ! ” repeated James, in a tone not altogether flattering. “ That Reynolds always turns up when he is least wanted,” he added, as Wilcox withdrew : “ He has no tact—ten to one, he’ll keep me an hour. Well ! I suppose you must excuse me, Gabrielle. I’ll come back as soon as I can.”

He went ; and Gabrielle, to beguile the waiting, took up a book.

A new book, partly uncut ; “ Four Essays ” by name. To one of these Essays Gabrielle turned, and began to skim it over. But soon, instead of skimming,

she found herself reading, her interests thoroughly aroused. The first few lines sufficed to stamp it as of more than ordinary merit. Advancing further, she was surprised to see how rich in powerful diction, in striking ideas, in original thought, was almost every page. Take it altogether, she thought, this must be a wonderful book—the work of a wonderfully gifted mind.

Only, underlying all the beauty, all the talent, ran a want. She did not pause to analyze this want; but she knew that it was there. Every now and then, it seemed to chill her—to create within her a certain vague sense of dreariness, of desolation. And yet when, James reappearing, she closed the volume, she felt as though she had fallen from some superior atmosphere, some grander world. Half in a dream, she followed her cousin to the hall; donned the straw hat, and suffered him to wind the

plaid round her shoulders. Then, still in a dream, passed out, he with her, upon the terrace: a long, old-fashioned walk, bordered by a moss-grown balustrade.

The air was fragrant with lilacs; the sky was cloudless, spangled with innumerable stars. James and Gabrielle had slowly paced the whole length of the terrace, and had turned to retrace their steps: before either spoke.

"You seem preoccupied this evening, Gabrielle?"

"Oh!" said Gabrielle, effervescing in a sigh a portion of her superabundant enthusiasm: "Oh! I have found such a beautiful book—a book of real genius! 'Four Essays;' who wrote it, James? I never saw it, or heard of it, till just now. There was only one drawback——By-the-by——" she exclaimed, stopping short in her walk, while a sudden light broke out over her

face—"By-the-by, you promised to put it on the table! James, do speak—do tell me. It is, isn't it?"

"What?" said James, smiling at her eagerness.

"Your book—the book that 'everyone is raving about.' Oh, it must be! James, do answer."

"Well, Gabrielle, I confess; 'Four Essays' is my book. I put it on the drawing-room table, this morning, before I went to Rotherbridge. And now let me hear your opinion."

"How can you stoop to ask my opinion, after writing such a book?" said Gabrielle, with a reverential glance.

He smiled again; but his smile was somewhat melancholy.

"Ah, Gabrielle—I hoped to have done something greater than that, by the time that I was five-and-twenty! When people

say so much of it, I think—Alas for one standard! My mind was full, and I felt constrained to write—something—somehow. These essays—essays in the most limited sense—were the result. And now I am really in earnest; tell me your impressions. You spoke of a drawback. What is it?”

“Well,” said Gabrielle, whose dread of affectation always served as a balance to her natural timidity—“Well, if you won’t think me presumptuous, I’ll confess that now and then, even while the beauty and the genius were stirring my heart, came passages which made me feel as though cold water had suddenly been thrown upon me, and had put out—oh! ever so much of light and warmth! Perhaps the philosophy is too high for me—too far above my head. But at the time I could not help fancying that there was too much contempt in the spirit of the book, too little geniality and

sympathy. One may be genial, and sympathetic too, without being either weak or sentimental. Don't you think so?"

"Certainly I think so. But I believe that the chill which you describe was caused by your considering the subject from a feminine point of view: in other words, in the light of the Affections. I conceived those essays, not with my heart, but with my mind. In my opinion the heart is inferior to the mind; and to prefer the desires of the heart before the aims of the mind is a mistake, a highly injurious mistake. I may have gone a little too far, have disparaged unnecessarily the minor things of life; but this I look upon as a fault on the right side."

"Do you?" said Gabrielle, half sorrowful, half wondering. "Do you really consider that the intellect is so superior to the affections?"

"Undoubtedly," returned James, in an emphatic tone. "Animals can love. Dogs

are among the most affectionate creatures in existence ; and bears dote upon their cubs. But they are incapable of reason—they can appreciate nothing that does not appeal to the senses ; and, in my judgment, so far as a man allows his lower nature—his passions, his affections—to acquire an influence over his higher nature, so far that man descends in the scale of creation—descends towards the level of a beast. This species of argument is employed in a somewhat different sense by moralists. A beast is governed by appetite : *ergo*, they say, if man be governed by appetite, he becomes a beast. So he does. But I extend the idea. Not sin alone, but weakness, the immoderate indulgence of the affections, and so forth—all these things lower a man.”

“Do you mean that it lowers a man to love his wife and his children ?”

“Not if we love them in a reasonable

way. What I mean is, that the intellect and its pursuits should come first, and the affections last, in thought, in interest, in the division of time. For example, a man should not so love his wife and his children, as that his mind is full of them, that his will yields pre-eminence to theirs, that, when they die, he is unable to resign them with equanimity, or, at least, with calmness. A man who cannot command his emotions, is not a free man, but a slave."

"James, this is cold, stoical doctrine. I could never admire it, never,—argue as you might. And what is the use, after all, of such rigid discipline?"

"The use? Picture to yourself a temple, rising gradually, stone by stone. Until it stands complete, perfect in majesty—each little carving, each stately pillar, finished alike without a flaw. Such is man, Gabrielle—or, rather, such he might be, if he

would : if he would but begin early, as his chief concern, in the work of building himself up. Moulded in the image of the Divine! Is it divine, Gabrielle, to be swayed by the gust of passion? to be dependent on a fellow-creature? to bow beneath the mere external influences of pain, of sorrow, of death?"

Gabrielle paused.

"I believe," she said at last, "that you are right in your object, but mistaken in your means."

"How?"

"I can't explain as you do, James. But I think I can give you some idea of what I wish to say. Once, in a beautiful little book, called 'Earth's Many Voices,' I read a story about an Alpine girl, who had a fancy to gather the whitest, which was also the highest, flower upon a certain mountain. And, this being her ambition, she would have passed the lower flowers by, as of no

use—a hindrance rather. But a gentian spoke, and told her not to despise those lower flowers, for that each was good in its way. So, as she climbed, she stooped and gathered every little blossom that she happened to see, each a few steps above the last. Thus she passed from beauty to beauty, and from height to height, until she reached the highest, the most beautiful, of all.”

“But life is too short,” said James, impatiently. “While we stop to pluck the lower flowers, daylight declines, night falls, and we are only half-way up the hill.”

“But will not daylight come again?” said Gabrielle. “And then, shall we not go on rising, for ever and for ever?”

James made no reply. He believed himself to be a good churchman and a tolerable theologian. Nevertheless this idea was new to him. It may seem strange,—but

he had never realized, as a fact, the "Life Everlasting."

"With regard to what you say about the intellect and the heart," added Gabrielle, "I am not able to answer you; and, in a measure, no doubt, you are right. But I can't help thinking of that verse in the Bible—'Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.' Edifieth, in its primary sense, means 'buildeth up,' doesn't it?"

James was still silent; she began to fear that her presumption had disgusted him. She thought of the power, the eloquence of the "Four Essays," and wondered how she had dared to speak so boldly.

The bell rang for prayers.

"We must go in," said James; and in they went.

On the topmost step, Gabrielle paused to ask—

"James, have I offended you?"

"Offended me!" he replied, laughing—
"My dear child! It is a natural sequence that, being feminine, you should see things in a feminine light."

Gabrielle secretly swelled; but she said nothing more: and they entered the drawing-room.

A day or two later, as she and Olivia were returning from a walk, they fell in with four equestrians: who proved, on inspection, to be the Bijou, the Bijou's brother, Miss Carew, and a gentleman unknown. They had taken Miss Gordon at her word, announced The, and had come to luncheon. Was it convenient? because, if not, they would wheel round and retire. Olivia was properly horrified at this suggestion, and the whole party proceeded to the house.

But first, Miss Featherstone had begged to introduce Lord Joseph Postlethwaite, the

gentleman unknown. He was about eight-and-twenty years of age, exceedingly long and lanky ; he had high shoulders, red hair, and a red face ; he had, further, a retreating chin, and no forehead in particular. At luncheon he sat beside Gabrielle, and they conversed as follows :

Lord Joseph.—"Awfully dull neighbourhood, is it not?"

Gabrielle.—"My cousins don't find it so. There is generally something, of one kind or another, going on, I believe,—except, perhaps, in the spring."

Lord Joseph.—"Ah!—exactly—yes—in the spring. They are all at town in the spring, of course—the Featherstones and everybody. The Featherstones go to-morrow. Exactly."

A long interval, during which Lord Joseph devoured cold chicken and drank sherry, with intense enjoyment ; and stared, over

the rim of his wineglass, at Miss Featherstone.

Lord Joseph.—"What confounded hot weather we have had lately!"

Gabrielle.—"It has never been too hot for me. I think heat is delightful in the country."

Lord Joseph.—"You really think so? 'Pon my word, Miss Featherstone said precisely the same at breakfast! Singular. But I assure you it was so. Exactly."

A second long interval, occupied as above.

Lord Joseph.—"A fine place, this. Famous preserves!"

Gabrielle assented.

Lord Joseph.—"Captain Featherstone is a first-rate shot. I do very little in that way myself. *He* fond of shooting?" jerking his head in James's direction.

Gabrielle.—"I believe he is very fond of it."

Lord Joseph.—"Ah! undoubtedly. So I should imagine. Exactly. Yes."

After which, for the remainder of luncheon, his lips were sealed.

Miss Featherstone, meanwhile, was undergoing some slight perturbation of mind. James was certainly more alive to Gabrielle's presence than he should have been, she by. In revenge, she betook herself, when luncheon was over, to flirtation with Lord Joseph, glancing from time to time, under cover of her eyelashes, at the offender, to see what he thought. He thought that she was in earnest, considerately left the happy couple to themselves, and beguiled the intervals of a long "eight game" of croquet by chit-chat with Captain Featherstone and Miss Carew. Had it been chit-chat with Gabrielle, she would have called it pique, and taken comfort. As it was, she quitted Farnley in no agreeable humour.

"That nasty little cousin," she observed to Miss Carew, "will be cooped up with Mr. Gordon all the summer. A golden chance, as she's fully aware.—But it will cost her some pains."

"Certainly," soliloquized James, the same evening, as he smoked his cigar on the terrace—"Certainly she has no dislike to that ass, nor he to her; and—— Well! at any rate, it is a pleasant thought that the world is off to London, and that I am free to follow my own devices, and spend as much time as I like over that dear child Gabrielle. I could never have believed, if I had not seen, that such a sweet little thing existed among women! So unaffected, through and through, she is; and so eager, so full of interest in all she undertakes."

He mused for a long time upon this increasingly fruitful theme. He might so have mused until midnight, had he not

been interrupted. A passing bell rang with startling clearness through the calm evening air. Another human tale—short, fitful, broken—was told. Young Anthony Holt was dead.

CHAPTER XII.

You first called my woman's feelings forth,
 And taught me love ere I had dream'd love's name.

.

. At last
 I learn'd my heart's deep secret.

LETITIA ELIZABETH LANDON.

SUMMER drew on apace. The lengthening days rolled by, quickly as happily. Gabrielle became a good horsewoman; her singing prospered,—likewise her organ-lessons. She read, too—chiefly books selected by James; books which made her think, which cultivated her reason, interspersed with others of a lighter kind—good wholesome novels, poems, travels, and so forth. Her morbid desire to die had altogether

vanished. Only ~~one thing~~ troubled her—a sense of insecurity, of living in a dream that must sooner or later “fade into the light of common day.”

One morning, at the beginning of June, a black-edged note, with a delicate scent and an elaborate monogram, arrived from Lady Louisa Pembroke. It invited Gabrielle to spend three nights in the ensuing week at Lorton; in order—so the note ran—that dear Charlie’s relatives might become properly acquainted with her before the long vacation.

This circumstance afforded great satisfaction to Olivia, who repeatedly congratulated Gabrielle on the evident friendliness of “dear Charlie’s relatives.” The invitation was therefore accepted—the three nights being commuted to two. For it so happened that on the third night, James, by request of the Rotherbridge Early Closing Association, was to deliver, in the Rotherbridge Town-hall, a

lecture, which Gabrielle would have been sorely grieved to miss.

The day appointed for her departure came; she started in solitary glory. After half an hour's drive along the high road, the carriage entered upon a shady lane, and shortly turned in at a white gate of antiquated appearance—the gate of Lorton Court. The Court itself was a venerable building, gable-ended, with mullioned windows, and doors of massive oak. Gabrielle presently found herself being ushered by a white-haired butler, across a wainscoted hall, into a drawing-room with satin hangings, brocaded chairs, and stools of tambour work.

The butler, as he was about to retire, coughed—a cough aged and prolonged; which seemed to attract the attention of some person in an adjoining apartment. The flutter of a fan was heard; and a plaintive voice said—

"Groves!"

"Yes, my lady," said the butler, disappearing, in a great hurry, behind a half-open door.

"Groves," in an audible under tone, "has Miss Wynn arrived?"

"Yes, my lady. Miss Wynn is in the drawing-room, my lady."

"And where is Miss Euphrosyne? Pray tell Miss Euphrosyne, Groves; pray remind her. Say that I am sure she does not wish to be impolite; but that our guest is entirely alone. Entirely alone, Groves," said the voice, increasing in plaintiveness.

"Yes, my lady," responded Groves.

As he re-entered the drawing-room, Euphrosyne—after the precipitate manner not uncommon to young ladies of "the awkward age"—burst in at the opposite door. She bore down like a whirlwind upon Gabrielle, leaving the door to slam, and overturning

one of the tambour-work stools. Angularity was at this time the distinguishing characteristic of Euphrosyne's appearance ; but she had a pleasant face, and a bright smile—she had, further, Charlie Godfrey's blue eyes, a fact of itself sufficient to prepossess Gabrielle in her favour.

“Mamma is not quite well to-day—she wished me to ask you to be so very good as to excuse her till after luncheon. There will be Miss Reinheldt, and me, and Ianthe, and the children too, you know, if you can put up with us,” said Euphrosyne.

Gabrielle made some polite reply, and felt secretly none the less pleased. She was now conducted, up a slippery flight of oak stairs, and along a slippery passage, to her room : Euphrosyne chatting all the way.

“Is it not a ghostified house ? But you need not be frightened, for your room opens into ours—Ianthe's and mine ; and at

night we can leave the door open. The passage is haunted. The servants tell us wonderful stories about it; and Ianthe generally believes them, till she has talked them over with Miss Reinheldt. Miss Reinheldt reasons away all such foolishness in no time, she is so clever. Mamma delights in this house."

"Does she?"

"Oh! yes; because it is so antiquated, you know, and so romantic—so like a house in a novel. She engaged Groves, our butler, to suit the surroundings. He is so old that he can hardly get through his work; and Miss Reinheldt says that he ought to be in an almshouse. But mamma means to keep him; she likes to look at him and fancy that he is an ancient retainer of the family."

"I thought that he must be one."

"So everybody thinks. But he isn't. We have only had him two months; and

he came to us from a Mr. Perkes, a wholesale tallow-dealer. There's the luncheon bell. Are you ready?"

They descended to the dining-room, where they found Ianthe, a gentle edition of Euphrosyne; with several younger children, equally gifted in the matter of names; and Miss Reinheldt, the governess. For the latter lady, a middle-aged German, who took the head of the table, Euphrosyne evidently entertained a profound respect. She deferentially drank in every sentence that Miss Reinheldt uttered; then glanced at Gabrielle, with eyes which inquired—"Was there ever such a person before?" And, without doubt, Miss Reinheldt was clever, sensible, in every way superior. But Gabrielle could not be expected to learn all this by intuition, or in half an hour of the intercourse of a luncheon-table. How then was it that, on being questioned, immediately

afterwards, her estimation of Miss Reinheldt's worth satisfied even Euphrosyne?

"Miss Wynn, I am indebted to your cousin, Mr. Gordon, for much pleasure—and, I may add, much instruction. Of course you have read his 'Four Essays?'"

"Oh! yes," said Gabrielle, her eye kindling, her cheek flushing.

"I have seldom met with an English book more thoroughly to my taste. It is so rich in suggestive ideas. And then—the language is so fine!"

"Yes—beautiful!" said Gabrielle. Euphrosyne scrutinized her, curiously.

"Gabrielle, you must be very proud of your cousin! Everyone is talking about him."

"I do feel rather proud of him sometimes," Gabrielle answered.

She might have answered—"Very proud of him always!"

"Mamma met a gentleman in Oxford—

very clever—an author, and all that, you know. He began talking of the ‘Four Essays,’ and he said that the London critics had a high opinion of Mr. Gordon. They expect him to be something grand some day.”

“How painfully incoherent you are, my dear Euphrosyne! Pray be more careful in expressing yourself,” cried Miss Reinheldt, smiling; and Euphrosyne was silenced. But she had said enough to keep Gabrielle in a state of abstraction during the remainder of the meal.

Shortly after luncheon the aged Groves announced, that her ladyship would be glad to see Miss Wynn, if Miss Wynn would not mind the trouble of stepping to her ladyship’s boudoir.

To her ladyship’s boudoir, therefore, Gabrielle repaired. The flaxen-haired widow was reclining upon a sofa, the atmosphere redolent of rose-leaves. Beside her stood a small

table, bearing a scent-bottle, a fan, a roll of worsted-work, and a book—conspicuously open—entitled “Lays for the Afflicted.”

“Ah, Miss Wynn! I am glad to see you,” said the plaintive voice. Three fingers, very fat and very white, were tendered to Gabrielle’s clasp. “Come here, my dear—near me; yes, that chair. My feelings are so often too much for me! They were too much for me this morning—quite wore me out—or I should have been with you at luncheon. But my Euphrosyne took care of you—and Miss Reinheldt? I hope you were happy?”

“Thank you, quite. They are very kind.”

“I’m so glad—so glad to hear it! I never desire to be missed. I never expect it, and therefore it is no surprise to me that I never am. Out of sight out of mind, you know, dear. But I have not sent for you to talk of myself. There is a more interesting topic

to be broached. Perhaps you can guess it?"

She paused, and the large, light eyes, fraught with sentimental meaning, fixed themselves on Gabrielle's face. But Gabrielle only opened her own eyes a little wider than usual, and declared herself unable to guess anything.

"Ah, my dear! you need not hesitate. You can open your heart to me. *I* have been young. *I* have loved. *I* shall not ridicule; neither shall I betray. Come, tell me all about it."

"I don't know what you mean," said Gabrielle, half amused, half perplexed.

"Ah! I so thoroughly understand a reserved nature. My nature is reserved. The finest natures frequently are reserved. The grief that cannot speak, whispers the o'er-charged heart, and bids it break. My heart was nearly broken once, and I found relief by unburdening it to a friend. You shall

find the same, my dear. I will be that friend to you."

"But my heart is not inclined to break. At least," said Gabrielle, laughing, "I feel no symptoms of it, yet."

"Love is a strange thing," said Lady Louisa, laying the three fat fingers across her eyes, so that, the flaxen ringlets also considered, her face was well-nigh buried: "Love is a strange thing. Deceptive, too—wondrously deceptive. I have meditated much and deeply upon this interesting subject, and not one of all its peculiar features strikes me more forcibly, than its exceeding reticence, its tendency to shrink from observation."

"I don't feel that," said Gabrielle: "When I love people, I like them to know it."

"Miss Wynn," said Lady Louisa, in an injured tone, "you are either very simple

or very artful. You must see, surely, to what kind of love I refer."

"Oh!" exclaimed Gabrielle, slowly, as a new light broke in upon her: "But then I don't understand that kind of love, as yet."

This astounding confession brought Lady Louisa's eyes from their shade. In a solemn and prophetic voice, she answered,

"You do not understand, Miss Wynn—or Gabrielle—I suppose I may call you so?—you do not understand that kind of love? Say, rather, that you do not understand its symptoms. I will put your ignorance, or your innocence, to the test. Is there no one—do you know no one, with whom you feel satisfied, in your element? more satisfied, more in your element, than you feel with anyone else? No one whose step causes your heart to bound, whose touch thrills through you, over whose simplest words you ponder, as though they had been the

most glorious speeches imaginable? No one in whose absence you are conscious of a blank, a craving, an *ennui*, whose opinion outweighs to you that of the whole world beside; who is continually in your dreams; who comes involuntarily to your thoughts, if your imagination or your emotions be stirred by poetry or by music? No one to whom you look, as to a model of human perfection—whom you reverence almost as you might reverence an angel? No one—?”

She ceased, for her shaft had sped home. By degrees the innocent wonder had faded from Gabrielle's eyes; the childlike serenity of the mouth had given place to a graver expression. Finally, over the fair young face came a glow of colour. It rose to the forehead; it descended to the throat. Her companion's curiosity was appeased.

“Lady Louisa,” said Gabrielle, after a pause.—Had she been conscious of her own

confusion, she would not have spoken ; but she was totally unconscious of it,—as of the impression that she was producing. Her mind was otherwise absorbed.—“Lady Louisa, if I could answer yes to those questions—if I did know anyone who was all that to me,—would it prove——”

Her voice trembled. Lady Louisa helped her out.

“It would prove that you were in love, my dear ; and, in fact, you are so, as I have seen from the first. Should I address such questions to my fancy-free Euphrosyne, or to my innocent Ianthe ? Certainly not. Nothing is more harmful than to awaken a young maiden soul before its time. But you are different. Ah, yes ! how it revives my early days ! He showed me some of your letters, poor dear boy, at Oxford. He was so glad to open his heart to me,” &c., &c.

Thus continued Lady Louisa's plaintive murmur, "like water for ever a-dropping"—or "a-flowing," rather. But all was lost upon Gabrielle. She sat as if in a dream. For the moment, one overwhelming idea excluded every other from her mind.

"If that be true,—If that is love,—I love James!"

* * * * *

"Naturally, yes; you must feel it:" were the words which met Gabrielle's ears, when, after some minutes of entire abstraction, she returned to the outer world: "You must feel it—both you and he, poor fellow!" ("Feel what? And who is the poor fellow?" thought Gabrielle.) "Poor darling Mr. Pembroke was absent three months at the beginning of our engagement. So, my love, you may safely confide in me. Some cannot sympathize; but I can. The long vacation will soon begin; and you shall meet him

here. Supposing that I asked Miss Gordon to spare you for six weeks—what would she say? Certainly he could at any time ride or walk to Farnley; but that would not be the same thing. In such cases the evenings are so precious. Yes, my love?”

“Lady Louisa, you are mistaken,” said Gabrielle, blushing deeply: “Indeed, Charlie—there is nothing——”

“On that point,” interrupted Lady Louisa, “his behaviour has been most honourable. He would not fetter you—he wished you to see more of the world ere he spoke. But, oh, dear Gabrielle! what are words? The heart has a higher language. Perhaps you are occasionally troubled by misgivings? Love was never yet without the pang, the agony, the doubt. However, you need not fear. *I* say so. See the comfort of confiding in a friend like me! I read in his manner, I read in his eye, that he was your

true, devoted knight, your *preux chevalier*.
So doubt no more."

Lady Louisa paused to take breath; and Gabrielle, who had been vainly endeavouring to speak—each endeavour checked by a slight elevation of the plaintive tones, a flourish of the fan—Gabrielle at length broke in, with considerable impetuosity,

"Lady Louisa, indeed—you are entirely mistaken. Charlie and I are friends—brother and sister—nothing more."

"Well! we'll let it drop for the present," said Lady Louisa, smiling softly: "I cannot expect full confidence all at once. But if ever you should need help, help and tender counsel, then,"—the three fingers pressed Gabrielle's wrist, while the flaxen ringlets trembled—"then, my child, remember me: the broken-hearted, and, therefore, the pitying, Louisa!"

Gabrielle afterwards feared that at this

juncture, she had shown herself sadly impolite, for she said not so much as "Thank you," disengaged her wrist, and, rising, began to admire the view from the nearest window. Lady Louisa's attention, however, was happily diverted by the sudden appearance of Euphrosyne.

"My sweet Euphrosyne!" said she, in an injured tone: "You are—when you recollect—consideration itself; and if you had borne in mind my very particular dislike to unexpected noises, no doubt you would have entered more quietly. As it is, I feel quite startled and overcome. Pick up my fan, dear child; and ring for Bellhouse—I must have some salvolatile. Euphrosyne, did you hear? You love to be of use. Here is an opportunity. Pick up my fan."

Euphrosyne, with composure, obeyed; and, after a short pause, turned to Gabrielle. Miss Reinheldt had proposed an afternoon

in the hay-field—would Gabrielle come too? She glanced at Lady Louisa.

“Go, my dear, by all means,” said the plaintive voice: “I am never so happy as when left with my own musings. Solitude is the widow’s portion. Go and enjoy yourself.”

Gabrielle did go, nothing loath. She sat between Euphrosyne and Ianthé under a tree; and Miss Reinheldt sat close by, and read the “Daisy Chain” aloud. Gabrielle listened, watched the hay-makers, worked at a little needle-case—which she was making, by Olivia’s request, for Sarah Jane Tompkins. In her ears resounded Lady Louisa’s words: “Is there no one, do you know no one, in whose presence you feel satisfied, happy, in your element?”—blending with Miss Reinheldt’s German accent, Cocks Moor, Ethel, Norman: while, from the other end of the field, softened by distance,

came the voices of the hay-makers.—So the day wore on.

Lady Louisa appeared at dinner. Euphrosyne and Ianthe, with the sister next to them in age, were also present.

“I love to be surrounded by my children,” said Lady Louisa, glancing through her flaxen ringlets, at Gabrielle: “These dear girls always dine with me, when we are alone. Should you ever be a widow—which Heaven forbid!—you will understand it.”

At length, to Gabrielle's joy, came bedtime. Now, in the solitude and silence, she could disentangle her ideas. This new, this sudden consciousness—what was it? Something very wrong, very unmaidenly? Asking herself this question, Gabrielle blushed—a hot, deep blush, spreading, despite the darkness, all over her face and neck.

For, unsophisticated though she was in

all such matters—as unsophisticated as could well be possible for any girl in her twentieth year—she yet knew that to be won unsought, is considered a degradation. The very height of degradation did it appear, just now. “Can that have been the case with me?” she thought: but only for a moment. Then rushed, in a flood, upon her memory, a thousand looks, words, gestures: which, as coming from James, had made her happy—with a happiness that she had never analyzed. She remembered her first awe of him—how disposed she had been to regard him as a demi-god, from afar. He himself had dissipated her fears. His own hand had drawn her to a closer place. He had sought her: not she him.

And yet it could hardly be called seeking, in the common acceptation of the term. She recollected the scorn with which he spoke and wrote of all matters connected

with the heart. "Perhaps—" thought the simple child—"he hopes that I shall never marry, and that he and I and Olivia shall live together, nicely and comfortably, all our lives, as we are living now. But I'll try—yes, I'll try my best—to put these ideas away,—to forget them quite. I wish I had never seen Lady Louisa!"

Then she hid her face in the pillow, and cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

He, the grandest of them all,
 Yet so gentle and so kind !
 Smiling lip and sparkling eye,
 Strong in courage, clear in mind.

As in yonder azure deep,
 Shines that bright and glorious star,
 So in my clear heaven he shines,
 Bright and glorious, lofty, far !

Onward, onward hold thy course,
 Let me but thy radiance see ;
 On thee let me humbly gaze,
 Sad, yet happy, let me be !

Adalbert von Chamisse,

TRANSLATED BY R. I. M.

THE day of James's lecture had arrived,
 and Olivia had promised, that at three
 o'clock the carriage should call to take Ga-

brielle home. But three, half-past three, four, had struck, and no carriage was forthcoming. Gabrielle had been ready some time, and had strolled, with Lady Louisa, her daughters, and Miss Reinheldt, into the garden. Lady Louisa was revolving the possibility of drawing Gabrielle away, down some side-walk, and getting rid of the others. This Gabrielle perceived; and her anxiety, in listening for the wheels, increased.

“Hark!” said Euphrosyne, suddenly.

A moment later, to Gabrielle’s deep relief, the pony-carriage appeared in the avenue.

“Who is that gentleman, my dear?” said Lady Louisa.

“My cousin James,” replied Gabrielle, her cheeks crimson.

“Indeed! You must introduce me. I hear that he is quite a lion.”

So they walked all together towards the

house, reaching the door just as James, with his black ponies, was making the grand final sweep.

All Gabrielle's old shyness of this formidable cousin seemed now to revive. She felt it no light task to advance in front of the rest, and, after a timid "How do you do?" to make known Lady Louisa Pembroke to Mr. Gordon; then, beneath his eye, to bid her adieux, and take her place in the carriage.

"Pray, Mr. Gordon," said Lady Louisa, "thank your sister for sparing Gabrielle; and tell her that, some time in the vacation, I shall ask the same favour again."

James bowed—a little stiffly, Gabrielle thought. Lady Louisa waved her fan, Euphrosyne smiled and nodded, and the ponies cantered away.

"Did you think that we had forgotten you?"

"I thought that you were rather late in sending for me."

"It was Olivia's fault. What should she take it into her head to do, but invite Mr. Edgecumbe, his wife, and a lady visitor, to go to Rotherbridge in our carriage! That, of course, with Olivia herself, fills it, and you and I are turned out. I put off coming till now, because I want to do the whole thing at a stretch—drive straight from Lorton to Rotherbridge, without stopping at Farnley."

"I thought that the lecture did not begin till half-past seven."

"No more it does; but Olivia, you, and I are to dine at the Rectory, and go to the Town-hall with the Turners' party.—By-the-by, I've a piece of news for you. My sister Marian is engaged to be married."

"Oh! indeed? I am so glad—" began Gabrielle.

James smacked his whip impatiently.

"Is not that a woman all over?" said he, with a sarcastic smile: "Only mention the word engaged, and she is glad: *couleur de rose* taken for granted. However, in this case, I believe, your gladness has some foundation. It is not a foolish boy-and-girl affair, I am thankful to say. Marian is twenty-three—a very fair age to begin matrimony; and Cavendish is thirty-nine, a capital fellow, and an admiral to boot. How have you enjoyed yourself, Gabrielle?"

"Oh, tolerably—they are very kind; only one can't get used to people all at once. I shall like it better next time, especially if——"

"If what?" said James; for she had come to a sudden pause. He looked at her, a little surprised, and saw that she was blushing—that, as he looked, the blush deepened.

"If Charlie be there," she went on, stoop-

ing to pick up her parasol: "Charlie Godfrey. Lady Louisa has asked me to go again and meet him."

"That was what she meant, I suppose, just now, when she mentioned the vacation."

"Yes, I suppose it was."

"What sort of fellow is that young Godfrey, Gabrielle? Clever?"

"Not exactly clever. His abilities are quite good enough for common use."

"He writes to you pretty often, doesn't he?"

"Every fortnight."

"When will he come to Meddiscombe?"

"Early next year. He hopes to be ordained at Christmas."

"You will be glad to have him so near?"

"Of course I shall. I am very fond of him," said Gabrielle, half perplexed. It was not like James to ask these trifling questions. And he looked grave—a little

stern, even : a cloud had come over his face. Perhaps he thought that she was not sufficiently reserved in her intercourse with Charlie Godfrey.

“You know, James, Charlie and I were only children, and, living in the same village, we were constantly together. It would have been very strange if, in all those years, we had not grown to care for one another.”

“Very strange indeed ; there is no necessity to justify it,” said James.

He spoke coldly ; and Gabrielle, although silenced, was by no means reassured. She leant back in the carriage, and wished that she had not mentioned Charlie's name. A moment ago she had inwardly reproached Lady Louisa for making her conscious ; but, perhaps, after all, it was well that, at her age, she should be conscious. Perhaps she had been, in her innocence, too open : more so

than befitted a young girl. She would take special care for the future,—anything sooner than that James should think her bold and unmaidenly. Then her mind went back to the time when ideas such as these were unknown to it; when she was with her father,—never in any danger of being misunderstood by him. For the instant, the agony of her bereavement revived in full force. She shrank from the untried state on the border of which she stood. Heights and depths hitherto unimagined, lay before her; she knew no way of escape.

“I would rather die than go through all that I may have to go through,” she thought, with an involuntary shudder. And a voiceless prayer sped up to Heaven, that she might die indeed.

But the prayer passed unanswered: such prayers usually do so pass. Life and death are not ours, to choose or to spurn, as we;

in our blindness, would have them. God, the All-Wise, has appointed to us lessons which life alone, it seems, can teach. We are at school, and we must stay out our time.

Half unconsciously, a little tear stole from Gabrielle's eye, and trickled down her cheek. James saw it, with a pang of compunction—not that he guessed its cause; but he was aware of having spoken under the influence of strong irritation, and he feared that some involuntary roughness of tone or manner had wounded her—she was so very sensitive! He roused himself, and set to work to restore her spirits. And ere long, soothed by his sudden change of mien, by the extreme gentleness, almost tenderness, which James could, if he would, assume, and assumed now, Gabrielle forgot her distress, becoming happy and light-hearted once more.

She was sorry when they reached Rother-

bridge, rattling noisily through the High Street, in company with a variety of other vehicles—flys, waggons, drays, and milk-carts. Now the drive was ended. They had turned in at the Rectory gates; the brick walls of the Rectory garden had swallowed them up. Gabrielle, feeling safe under James's wing—although about to face a whole phalanx of strangers—followed him to the drawing-room: where a large party was assembled, for the double purpose of seeing the lion eat and of hearing him roar. As he entered, the hum of conversation paused; every eye turned in his direction; and a whisper of, "Dear me! So that is Mr. Gordon!" was audible in a distant corner. The Rector, an eager, white-haired old man, hurried forward, with a cordial greeting; his wife followed; friend after friend pressed behind. Gabrielle, in the background, felt some curiosity as to how James would receive all this homage.

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She glanced at him: his countenance remained unchanged. Among those who surrounded him, he stood, to her eyes, like Hyperion among the Satyrs. Calm, courteous, dignified, with all the beauty, but, apparently, none of the susceptibility of youth, the interest which he was exciting produced on him no visible impression. Perhaps, indeed, the opinions of the present company signified, for the most part, little, one way or the other. But Gabrielle was sure that, had they signified much, his deportment would have been precisely the same.

She watched in veneration, mingled with a thrill of exulting joy, that he, to others so indifferent, was so mindful of her! Directly a breathing-space came, he turned to rescue her from the oblivion into which she had sunk; introduced her to the hostess; then followed her with his eyes, as, escorted by one of the daughters, she quitted the room

to unrobe. On returning, she found Olivia, who had arrived during the interim. Gabrielle slipped into a seat at her side.

"Gabrielle! I am so glad to see you! I must not kiss you here, I suppose. Are you well, dear child?"

"Quite, thank you. How happy you look, Olivia!"

"And ought I not to be happy? James has told you about dear Marian? Is it not delightful? Then James himself—I do love to see him appreciated! He is more handsome than ever this evening—don't you think so, Gabrielle?—with that unusually thoughtful expression, and his eyes so bright! Really, sometimes, he seems to me almost perfect! Not genius alone, but good looks, a noble air, winning manners: all are his. He is wonderfully gifted, Gabrielle!"

"You are quite eloquent, Olivia," said Gabrielle, smiling: while inwardly she re-

echoed every syllable. But why, as Olivia passed on to some one else, did two lines from a favourite poem come like an undertone, and blend with those words of praise?

“When souls of highest birth
Waste their impassioned might on dreams of earth.”

Why should such lines recur to Gabrielle's thoughts just now?

“The worst of Mr. Gordon is his terrible pride!” said a voice behind her.

Gabrielle glanced slightly round. The voice belonged to a downright, simple-looking girl, about her own age. Another girl, the person addressed, was eyeing James with a scrutinizing expression.

“I assure you he is provokingly proud,” continued the first speaker. “So self-sufficient! I detest self-sufficient people. They may deify him as they like. In my opinion he's a Peacock.”

"But so very clever! Surely he has some right to be conceited."

"Nonsense. No one has any right to be conceited. Besides, Mr. Gordon's not conceited. What I hate in him, is grander than conceit, according to some notions—but even more disagreeable and horrible, according to mine!"

At this moment James crossed the room, and took a chair at his fair critic's elbow.

"How do you do, Miss Thompson?" Gabrielle heard. "It is some time since I had the honour of meeting you."

"It is," said Miss Thompson, stiffly.

"What glorious weather we are having! When do you leave town, so to speak? You forsake old Rotherbridge every summer, I know."

"Yes, we go next Monday."

"I daresay, now, you look forward to it the whole year through?"

"I do indeed," exclaimed Miss Thompson.

The country was Miss Thompson's hobby, as James was aware. He passed on, and led her on, to a discussion of country privileges; sympathizing in her tastes; sometimes telling an amusing anecdote which made both the girls laugh, sometimes making an observation which brought with it a world of new ideas.

"I wonder what she would say of him now?" thought Gabrielle, resentfully. A moment later, James changed his place.

"I'm glad he's gone," observed Miss Thompson.

"Glad!—when he was so agreeable?"

"That's just it. If he'd stayed I should soon have been as blind as other people. He was winning me over fast, as he wins them."

"And as he has won thee," said a voice in Gabrielle's heart. Was she blind, too?

* * * * *

The Town-hall was crowded, chiefly by artizans and shopkeepers; but there was a large minority of other ranks, whom James Gordon's fame had attracted. From the twopenny seats in the background, peered many eager faces, haggard and prematurely aged in the struggle for bread and for life. Among these men—the least prosperous and the most laborious of the manufacturing population of Rotherbridge—James was well known; moreover, highly honoured. He wished, and, so far as he had opportunity, he showed that he wished, to help them, to be their friend. And when, on this evening, his handsome face a little flushed, his eye a little brightened, he mounted the platform, their greetings were so noisy, so prolonged, as to elicit more than one “Sh-sh!” and look of scandalized respectability, from sundry decorous persons in front.

"Is yon him as is boun' to spake? That yoóng chap!" said a stranger among the clappers. "What good ull he do us?—a teaching 's gran'feythers?"

"Happen ya'd better hark an' see," retorted a grey-headed man. "Solomon could a taught his gran'feythers a thing or two, a reckon, when he wore yoonger nor *yon*."

"Is yon Solomon, then?"

"Nay; but he's Mester Gordon. Mark ma woords, lad, Mester Gordon ull be a great mon, soom day."

The patriarch who thus spoke was renowned at Rotherbridge, as an oracle and a seer; and the stranger looked at James with more of deference. He condescended, further, to pay attention to the lecture; and before it was half over, he had come to the conclusion, that Mester Gordon was a great man already.

So also thought somebody else. Gabrielle

sat entranced. The young lecturer, whenever he looked—and he very often looked—in her direction, caught a new inspiration from the glowing face, the earnest eyes. His subject—"Great Men and their Power"—was one in which he felt himself peculiarly at home. As he advanced, his eloquence warmed. There was scarcely one inattentive person in the room. Those whom the grandeur of the sentiments could not reach, were unconsciously influenced by the musical rhythm of tone and sentence, and sat in mystified delight. Few, however, failed to comprehend at least the principal portion of that lecture; and many who had entered the room, dull, depressed, with unworthy, perhaps degraded views of life and of humanity, went forth into the world again, resolved henceforward to be or to do something there—something useful and honest, by which, not themselves alone,

but their fellow-men, might be ennobled. Perhaps, indeed, in the majority of cases, these aspirations speedily evaporated, and left no track. But surely not in all! And who can say what it is, what it may be, to influence one, even the weakest, of our brother men, for good—to kindle, if but in one poor spirit, a celestial spark?

The lecture was ended. James sat down. The clappings and stampings revived. People began to go out; there was a stir and a bustle. Gabrielle sighed, as we sigh when a beautiful sunset fades, when a voluntary is all played out, when a bright dream gives place to day. The usual comments passed from mouth to mouth. "A capital lecture!" "Very good!" "How clever!" Gabrielle felt inclined to stop her ears. As for her, she could not speak—she could only sit still and think it over. How proud she was, when James, disengaging himself from a bevy of acquaintances, approached her

with his own familiar smile, placed her cloak on her shoulders, and led her away, down the long room, in and out among the little chattering groups: who, as he passed, all paused and stared and admired.

In the doorway stood a gentleman, tall and gray-haired; a man with a large forehead and a keen eye. As James, with Gabrielle on his arm, was going out, this gentleman stepped forward, bowed, and intercepted them.

“Mr. Gordon, I have not the honour of your personal acquaintance. But I thought that you would allow me to thank you for the pleasure I have received from you to-night. You know me, perhaps, by name—Geoffrey Savill.”

James, who had been listening with his customary nonchalance, started, and a crimson flush spread to the roots of his hair.

For this name of Geoffrey Savill was one of

high repute in the literary world. Gabrielle saw, for the first time, in James's manner, a touch of something like nervousness.

"Sir," he said, "this is a great honour—" and stopped short.

"I was passing through Rotherbridge, saw your name advertized, and resolved to stay for the lecture. I have been amply recompensed. I ought now to be on my way to the station; but——" He clasped James's hand as a father might clasp the hand of a son. "You have made a high beginning, Mr. Gordon. Go on and prosper!"

Raising his hat to Gabrielle, he hurried away; and James stood still, looking after him, the flush deep upon his face.

"Gabrielle," said he, "this is true encouragement;" and his eyes shone.

"It is indeed," cried Gabrielle, equally excited. "And, oh, James! I feel sure that you will do as he said. You will 'go on

and prosper' in your glorious aims; and draw others with you."

They were out, under the stars, by this time. He took her hand, as it rested on his arm, and for a moment held it fast.

"Thank you, Gabrielle," he said. It was no common "Thank you," and Gabrielle treasured it in her heart. The pony-carriage was waiting; they drove silently home, through the starlight. So the evening closed.

It was strange that, despite all his triumph, a vague sense of uneasiness, of something wrong somewhere, hankered in James's heart. At least he thought it strange; he told himself that he had no idea of the cause. But surely his dreams might have enlightened him! For all the night through his pillow was haunted—painfully haunted—by one name, one face. The face was that of a young man—fair-haired, blue-eyed. The name was the name of Charlie Godfrey.

CHAPTER XIV.

Oneiza called him brother, and the youth,
More fondly than a brother, loved the maid.

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

IN these days Gabrielle's eyes grew larger, brighter; her colour, faint before, deepened into carmine; her shyness, her shrinking from society, disappeared; her laugh, peculiarly sweet and ringing, was often heard; her countenance shone, as from some inward radiance.

Olivia said that she was developing after her sorrow—as flowers when the winter is past. James said nothing; but his London visit was postponed week by week. He felt lazy, he told Olivia, and disinclined to move.

At length, however, an urgent letter from their married sister, Lady Peers, dispelled his lethargy, and he departed; leaving Olivia and Gabrielle *tête-à-tête*.

He wrote word, some ten days later, that he had invited a large party to Farnley for August. A shooting-party, he called it; but it would comprize several who did not shoot: among them Mrs. Featherstone and the Bijou. Gabrielle was sitting alone one morning, drawing mental pictures of Farnley with the house full of people; and feeling sad, she hardly knew why: when a ring at the hall door was followed by the entrance of Wilcox, and a gentleman whose name she did not catch. She looked up, in some astonishment, for Olivia was out, and met the familiar smile of Charlie Godfrey.

Anxiousness and confusion were alike forgotten. She sprang from her seat with a joyful cry of "Oh, Charlie! are you come at

last?" and flew towards him. He, no less delighted, evinced his delight, in a demonstrative manner; saying over and over again what great happiness it was to see her, to find her well: all the while holding her hand, and gazing with pleased scrutiny into her face.

At length the first greetings were over. Charlie sat down; and Gabrielle, taking her work, made a pretence of continuing it as they talked—every moment fresh topics arising.

"You are at Lorton, I suppose?"

"For five weeks, at least. My aunt means to ask you before long; the house is full just now. I say, Gabrielle," cried Charlie, playing a mild game of ball with a reel of cotton from Gabrielle's work-box—"I say—How awfully romantic my aunt is!"

"Yes, very," said Gabrielle, laughing.

"Upon my word, I never saw anyone

half so sentimental ! I've read of such people in books, you know, but I didn't believe in them. She puzzles me. I don't know what to say, when a pathetic mood is on her. I tried to comfort her 'at first—she seemed so down in the mouth ; but that didn't seem to answer. So now I hold my tongue, and look stupid. I can make neither head nor tail of half her inuendoes. Well !"—Charlie laid down the reel of cotton, and leant forward on his elbow—"Well ! tell me all about yourself. You get on well with the Gordons?"

"Oh, so well. I am so fond of them. At least, I only know Olivia and James."

"But they are nice to you?"

"Oh yes!"

Charlie's solicitude was fully satisfied. There was no possibility of mistaking that fervent tone.

"I am so glad !" he said, as though a

burden were removed from his mind—quite, in fact, as though Gabrielle's comfort were his own exclusive concern. “When I come to Meddiscombe, I shall be able to see to you myself. You remember the old agreement—I your true knight for ever? Meanwhile, though, it is an immense relief that you are in good hands. At first I could hardly bear to think of you; but now——”

“Now I am happy, Charlie, dear—yes, indeed I am. It seems strange, doesn't it? when one short year ago papa was everything, humanly speaking, to me, and now he is gone. But it is true.”

And, though her eyes filled with tears, her countenance did not belie her words.

“I am so glad,” repeated Charlie. There was nothing of self in his gladness. It never occurred to him to question what share he and his affection had had in restoring the sunshine to her life.

"By-the-by, Charlie, have you taken your degree?"

"Yes, I've taken my degree; and I've taken my leave of old Oxford. The degree is stunning—for me, I mean. You would never expect anything wonderful from me, you know."

"What is it?" said Gabrielle, smiling.

"A second in classics, and a third in mathematics. I was relieved, with a vengeance! I had been so awfully anxious.— Gabrielle, I breakfasted with Hawkins, at Meddiscombe, this morning, and, upon my word, I feel downright ashamed to think that a fellow like him should have to turn out for a fellow like me. I fear he'll be terribly missed. The only good of it is, I shall feel compelled to work hard, and to do my best, at any rate, to supply the blank. He'll be with me a year; that's one comfort: and he'll advise me all he can.

But I feel awfully inexperienced and inefficient. My heart almost fails me sometimes."

"My dear true knight, there must always be a beginning!"

"Ay, so Hawkins said to-day. And then—" his tone sank—"we've a better strength than our own, thank God! Well!" brightening, and resuming the reel of cotton—"What books have you been reading lately? What have you been doing? I know so little about your life here; and somehow—I can't describe it, but I can see it—a change has come over you, Gabrielle."

"A change?"

"You needn't look so confused. 'Tis nothing bad. Only that you were perfect, in my eyes, before, I should call it an improvement."

"I have seen more of the world, since I came here, you know!"

"Ah, but it's not that sort of change.

Never mind, though; one, or at most two, of our old talks will shew me the reason. We must keep up our habit of telling each other everything. You haven't grown reserved, I hope, Gabrielle?"

"I am much the same as I always was," said Gabrielle, uneasily.

Could he suspect?—Well, suspect what? she asked herself, catching herself up; and hastening to turn the subject by some trivial question about Eversfield.

She need not have feared. Charlie was far too simple to suspect anything, as yet.

"Eversfield? Oh, by-the-by. I thought that you would want to hear all about Eversfield. So—it was only a little out of my way—I went there, coming down."

"How good in you, Charlie! Now, please begin at the beginning; and tell me everything that you saw, and everything that you did."

Her work dropped on her lap ; she sat with hands folded and eyes uplifted. While Charlie, his honest face radiant with satisfaction, proceeded to fulfil her demands.

And just at this moment entered Olivia.

Entered—started—paused : was confirmed in her belief. She bestowed on Gabrielle a smile that spoke volumes ; then warmly greeted Charlie. This was indeed a pleasure ! When did he come ? She was delighted to see him. He must stay to luncheon.

Charlie did stay to luncheon ; and afterwards, Olivia had business upstairs, and he finished his talk with Gabrielle : thinking what a brick that Miss Gordon was ! At length he tore himself away ; and set forth on his return to Lorton. He could not, despite the heat, walk slowly ; his heart was so light ! He traversed the park at the rate of ten miles an hour, whistling a tune ; and,

absorbed by his own thoughts, failed to perceive that an individual, carrying a huge manuscript, and puffing and blowing to a painful extent, was advancing in the opposite direction. The result of this oversight—the individual being absorbed no less—was a sudden collision; in which Charlie's hat flew off; while the manuscript assumed the form of loose leaves, and floated here, there, everywhere.

"Bless me!" exclaimed the individual, standing still in the path: "Bless me!"

"I beg your pardon, sir. Forgive my awkwardness; I was thinking of something else," said Charlie, taking all the blame to himself: "But never mind. I'll soon set it to rights;" and he set to work to collect the papers.

This service, the individual—who was no other than Mr. Morris—permitted, without so much as an offer of assistance; staring

wildly at the young man, meantime ; and on receiving the manuscript, repeating, in lieu of thanks, " Bless me ! "

" Good afternoon, sir," said Charlie ; and was about to pass on, but Mr. Morris intercepted him, laid on his shoulder a hand encased in a very loose black glove, and exclaimed,

" Such a very strong likeness ! Stop one moment ! Must be some relation : eh ? "

" Some relation to whom, sir ? " inquired the youth, in patient politeness, choking down a disposition to laugh. " My name is Godfrey, if that be any assistance," he added, after a pause ; during which Mr. Morris was apparently endeavouring, without success, to swallow.

" Ah ! Guessed so. Heard of you through Miss Wynn. Fact is, I knew your—your father, a little, once ; and your face——"

" That's strange !—I mean, it's strange if

you guessed my name by my likeness to my father. I thought I had none. They say that I am the image of my mother."

"They say so, eh? Well, yes, it is your mother's face. I knew her too. That's over now. Done with. Finished. Book closed. Pen wiped. Eh?"

"Sir!" said Charlie, staring, and beginning to fear that he saw before him a lunatic who had lately escaped from the Rotherbridge Asylum. Mr. Morris saw his astonishment, and gustily apologized.

"Excuse me, Mr. Godfrey. I am something of a hermit, and apt to forget my manners. The sight of your face overcame me. Better now. Have you a minute to spare? Should be glad of a little conversation with you. Can you come to my house? Close by."

Charlie hesitated, consulting his watch. But catching in the old man's face an expression of wistful anxiety, his good-nature

prevailed, and he allowed himself to be conducted, through a clump of trees, and a small wicket gate, to a pretty, gable-ended cottage, covered with creepers.

"This is my abode," said Mr. Morris, waving his hand towards it. "Gordon's kind thought for me. Very comfortable. Many alleviations, you perceive."

Again he had wandered beyond Charlie's comprehension. The young man felt considerably mystified. Ere long he found himself seated in a room, half study, half parlour: the walls lined with folios, whose best days, like those of their master, were over. In the centre of the room stood a table; where a huge black inkstand, an ancient desk, a letter-case full to overflowing, a heap of quill pens bitten at the ends, and a pile of blotting-paper, contrasted somewhat strangely with a spray of wild roses, which bloomed in their midst—thrust,

innocent of arrangement, into a tumbler. Two leather-covered arm-chairs, much the worse for wear, standing one on either side the fireplace, were almost the only chairs left to answer the purpose of their construction. The others groaned beneath the burden of books, of coats, or of boots. Over the mantelpiece hung a dingy engraving of the Crucifixion; and a thermometer. The window was partially darkened by the multitude of creepers which climbed about it, forming a framework for a calm—in Charlie's eyes, a beautiful—view. The undulating slopes of the park, its trees, the church spire, a cottage roof or two; far beyond, the dim blue outline of the moors; beyond that, the western sky :—Mr. Morris loved a sunset.

“All this time, I have not the honour of knowing your name,” said Charlie.

“My name? Morris—Brian Morris. Do-

mestic chaplain to Mr. Gordon. Read prayers in his chapel every morning; sum total of chaplain's duties. Now you know all about me. Anything else to ask?"

"If you have no objection, I should like to hear where you met my parents."

"Ah!" His tone grew more gusty, more musical; and, as he spoke, he rocked himself to and fro. "It was years ago—five-and-twenty years ago. Your mother, Lady Rose Armytage, came to Leamington. She stayed with an uncle—a clergyman; I was his curate. Eccentric old gentleman, but kind. He took a fancy to me—had me often with him. I saw a great deal of her. She was there a long time. Very pretty—Very, very pretty. Well . . . !"

He sighed, long and deeply, and relapsed into a dream.

"And my father? I thought you——"

"Knew him too. Yes; so I did. *He*

came to Leamington. The play was played out. The curtain fell. Eh?"

"My mother was not married there," said Charlie, increasingly puzzled.

"No. They took her away. The vision faded. Well!"

He roused himself with a sudden start, and proceeded to wipe his spectacles.

"Well, Mr. Godfrey, if you should ever need advice or help—I'm odd in some ways, but I've reaped a good bushel of experience—if you should ever need a friend, or a father, come to me. Will you? Eh? I'd give the world to help you."

"Thank you—you are very kind," said Charlie.

"You look surprized. But times change, you know; you may have trouble yet. And in trouble, nothing like a friend. 'Thine own and thy father's friend forsake not.' Eh? Not an *àpropos* quotation, you think?"

Well, never mind! Do you take any interest in the fate of the Ten Tribes?" inquired Mr. Morris.

Charlie stared again.

"I can't say that I've much considered the subject," he replied.

"I am writing a Treatise concerning it; or, rather, hoping to write one. The Introduction is not as yet complete. Wonderful alleviations in study!" He produced the bulky manuscript. "What! you mustn't stay?"

"My aunt will be expecting me," said Charlie.

"Aunt! What aunt? Oh! Recollect. Lady Louisa. I heard that she had come to Lorton. But I don't know her. I never did know her. She never came to Leamington. She was much younger than—than——Well! it would be rather a wrench—I can't quite tell how I should manage;

but, if you very much desired it, you might take the Treatise to examine at your leisure."

"Oh! I couldn't think of so depriving you," cried Charlie, hurriedly rising. "Another time, perhaps, you'll allow me to drop in, and have a look at it here."

"Just so," answered Mr. Morris, deeply relieved. "That's what Gordon does occasionally. A wonderful head, Gordon's! But he wants trouble. Sooner or later no doubt he'll have it. Then you'll remember what I have said? I feel an interest in you. Will you believe me? Eh?"

It was impossible to look into that face, so furrowed, so kindly, and disbelieve. So at least thought Charlie.

"Thanks. You're very good. I'll remember. I'll come and see you again, before long."

He extended his hand; and it was wrung with a vehemence which Charlie would in-

deed have appreciated, had he known the limpness of Mr. Morris's ordinary grasp. At it was, he returned to Lorton happy in the thought that he had found a friend.

But his spirits were not so high as when he had quitted Gabrielle ; his merry whistle was still. For he felt as one who, opening a book at hazard, comes upon the final pages of a sorrowful tale. Pages commonplace in plot, perhaps, and in language ; but the more commonplace, the more universal,—and a tale that has been told once, may be told again.

CHAPTER XV.

O heart of stone, are you flesh, and caught
By that you swore to withstand?

ALFRED TENNYSON.

“GABRIELLE, did you not hear from
Lorton this morning?”

“Oh yes—I had almost forgotten! Charlie
is obliged to go at once into Surrey; his
uncle there, Sir Henry Godfrey, is ill.”

“Poor fellow, what a sudden blow!”

“It can hardly be called a blow,” said
Gabrielle, laughing. “Sir Henry is a great
hypochondriac; he has often sent for Charlie
in the same way before.”

“Mr. Godfrey will return to Lorton?”

“Oh yes. As soon as he can leave his
uncle.”

“And then, I trust, Lady Louisa will ask you again, dear child!” said Olivia, somewhat astonishing Gabrielle by a sympathetic kiss.

It was the day on which James, with Marian, Cissy, and Admiral Cavendish, were to arrive from London. The hours rolled slowly, and restlessly by. Gabrielle could settle to nothing. As evening drew on, she grew more and more nervous; her face flushed, her heart fluttered, at every sound. She dressed early, and went to the chapel organ. In this state of excitement, she dared not encounter the keen scrutiny of James's eye. Before he came, she must, she would, be composed.

So she took the “Elijah” from the pile of music-books, and forced herself to play steadily, over and over, “O rest in the Lord.” Gradually its deep calm, its unutterable peace, breathed stillness into Gabrielle's

spirit. The peal of the organ appeared to her like some angelic voice. "O rest," it said. "Rest, fevered throbbings—anxious imaginings—conflicting fears! O rest in the Lord!"

Something, in air or words, brought memories of Eversfield; of a summer Sunday, years ago, when her father had preached upon this very text, and when, afterwards, he and she and Charlie Godfrey had walked up and down under the trees in the rectory garden, listening to the nightingales, and discussing the sermon. What happy, innocent days those days had been! But they were ended now.

A voice at her elbow. She started and looked round. There stood James: his coat a little dusty, after the railway journey; his hair a little ruffled; his face a little flushed; but so handsome, so noble—so glad, evidently, to see her! Was it very surprising that Gabrielle's heart leapt up as their eyes

met? But the effort to conceal her feelings made her seem constrained, almost cold. James was sensible of something very like a pang, far down in the depths of his soul, as she rose with composure from her seat, and allowed her hand to rest, for one instant, passively, in his earnest clasp.

"Are you sorry that I am come back, Gabrielle?" said he, involuntarily. The next moment his pride revolted, and he wished that he had held his tongue.

"Why should I be sorry, James? I am glad, of course. How have you enjoyed yourself in London?"

"Well enough.—What were you playing? 'O rest in the Lord!' You have learnt that since I left."

"Yes, I have practised a good deal. I did not mean to be here when you all arrived, though. The clock in the hall must have stopped."

“No—it was merely the music that stopped your ears. The same thing has happened before, I think. Now will you be introduced to Marian and Cissy?”

She followed him to the drawing-room. The two new cousins stood with Olivia in the window, eagerly talking. As Gabrielle entered, they paused, and came forward to greet her: Marian polite and indifferent, Cissy scrutinizing and cold. Gabrielle had not expected from them any great cordiality at first; she should be thankful, she thought, if they would only not regard her as a bore! But she did wonder why Cissy scanned her with eyes so severely inquiring, and then so immediately turned away to speak to Admiral Cavendish. She was wondering still, when Gipsy, Cissy's little dog—which had been left, during her absence, at home—rushed into the room, and scampered round his mistress, in a state of wild delight. Cissy, falling upon

her knees, proceeded forthwith to embrace him ; Olivia and the rest drew near to laugh and comment ; and Gabrielle took advantage of being left to herself, to make a leisurely survey of the strangers.

The Admiral had the air of a kind-hearted and simple-minded sailor ; he had also a trim, upright figure, just below the middle height, fine features, and a weather-beaten complexion. His eyes, as they rested on Marian, were half lover-like, half paternal, as suited his superior years. She—a pretty, graceful girl, with chestnut hair, a small aquiline nose, and light eyes—seemed gentle, agreeable, and, if a little, only a little, affected. But Cissy, despite the severe glances, took Gabrielle's fancy most.

Cissy was very pretty ; much prettier than Marian : and more unique in style. In height, she rose far above both her sisters ; outstripping the average standard. Her hair

was brown, with a golden tinge : hair that glanced and gleamed in the sun. Her bright, dark eyes, had they been a trifle larger, would almost have rivalled her brother's ; while her little *piquante* nose and animated mouth gave a peculiar character to her face.

Her chief charm, however, lay in traits less easily described. Gabrielle had never before seen so much play of feature, expression so rapidly varying. Now it was bright this countenance, now clouded, now coaxing, now full of mischief ; never two minutes together quite the same. Of a similar genus were her movements ; perfectly graceful, but volatile and sudden as those of a child. And as a child, in fact, although in years she more than equalled Gabrielle, Olivia, and the Admiral also, appeared to consider her : a fascinating, half-spoilt child ; a creature to be petted, admired, humoured, and made allowance for.

Gabrielle watched her, considerably amused, until, at length, she ran out of the room. Then Gabrielle turned, and found that James, leaning with folded arms, against a window in the background, was watching *her*. Meeting her eye, he moved, and called to the Admiral, that, if they meant to dress this evening, they might as well set about it. This proved the signal for a general dispersion; and Gabrielle was left alone. She went out upon the terrace. The sunset glory was beginning to illuminate the sky. But she did not revel in it as usual; to-night there was glory everywhere.

“Olivia,” said James—who reappeared in the drawing-room full twenty minutes earlier than his fellow-travellers: “Olivia, how bright and well Gabrielle looks!”

“Yes; I have observed a great difference in her lately. We need be at no loss for the cause, I imagine:” and Olivia smiled.

"What do you mean?" said James.

She looked up in surprise; his tone was so sharp, so impatient.

"Can't you guess? She has seen Mr. Godfrey. He lunched with us one day last week. A most pleasant young man; and devoted, evidently, to Gabrielle."

"How interesting!"

"You naughty boy, James—speaking in that scornful tone! It quite did me good, I assure you, to see them together. She was so very happy, dear child."

James started from his seat, flung open the piano, and proceeded to thunder forth "Cujus Animam." He might have been a little more polite, Olivia thought, as she applied, in silent meekness, to her tatting.

"Cissy, do you know what is the matter with James?" she asked as, during the dusky interval between dinner and tea, they sat in the drawing-room, talking softly;

Gabrielle within earshot, although not joining in the conversation; Marian and the Admiral *tête-à-tête* upon a distant sofa: "Cissy, do you know what is the matter with James, to make him so gloomy and depressed?"

"Is he gloomy and depressed?" said Cissy: "I must watch him. I can't tell what is the matter with him, I'm sure. His spirits were good enough in London: only he has become a prey to fits of moodiness, which made Annie wonder whether he were in love. . Annie's head is always full of interesting suspicions."

"James in love!" exclaimed Olivia: "James in love!" She could get no further.

"Oh, Olivia! you dear silly, simple, unobservant old thing!" cried Cissy, impulsively kissing her; "Human nature is a sealed book to you, with all your common sense. Why shouldn't he fall in love, pray?"

He's a man ; and what is there to hinder his falling in love like other men ? Do you look upon him as a sort of anomaly, made of different stuff from the rest ? To be sure, he's very high-flown, and very high-and-mighty ; and he can write and talk very grandly. But what of that ? If a cock said, ' I'm an Angel,' would you believe him ?"

" But James despises love so !"

" That just shows how little he knows (poetry, Olivia !) of his own nature. Wait till he's tried, my dear. Not that I have discerned any certain symptom of the catastrophe, as yet. Mooniness is nothing ; I'm often moony myself. Certainly he's an outrageous flirt ; but that's nothing either."

" James a flirt ! Unintentionally, then," cried Olivia, half doubtful, half indignant.

" My dear, in London, he flirts right hand and left. I have watched him, often—don't

look so shocked—going on, first with one girl, then with another. And it is such fun to see how flattered they all seem, and how ridiculously delighted! It provokes me, though; they bow before him, as if he were the Grand Sultan. He, indeed!”

“Cissy! Cissy!”

“And you are just like them, Olivia. I call it idolatry,—downright, bare-faced idolatry,—worship of intellect. I’ve got no intellect myself; and I don’t want any. I’d far rather be good and kind and pleasant.”

“And is not James good and kind and pleasant? Oh, Cissy!”

“Well, yes—” said Cissy, with a shade of compunction: “But I can’t adore him, nevertheless; and I can’t think of him as anything but my brother, with whom I have played and quarrelled, many a time. Then on some points he’s most dreadfully mis-

taken. You may shake your head : he is : —and so, one day, you'll see."

Olivia compressed her lips. There was no use in arguing with Cissy.

At this moment the subject of their conversation appeared in the doorway ; and announced, that the evening was delightful after the heat, and that the stars were splendid. Would anyone like to join him on the terrace ?

"Not I, thank you," replied Cissy, closing her eyes in mock languor : "I'm far too tired. And I want Olivia, so you can't have her either. Go away, please."

"Lazy child ! This is what comes of three months' dissipation. Marian, what do you say ?"

"I ! I couldn't stir another step to-night, except to go to bed," she answered, in her gentle, half-affected voice. The Admiral did not speak. He was enjoying his

twilight chat with Marian far too much to exchange it for a quarter-deck walk with her brother.

But still James lingered.

"Gabrielle," said he, after a minute's silence : "you are not tired, are you?"

"Not at all, thank you, James : " and the colour stole up into her face.

"Doesn't it seem a shame to waste an evening like this in the house?"

Gabrielle hesitated ; while Olivia, who believed that she was afraid of taking cold, made haste to assure her that the air was exceedingly mild, and that she might do as she chose.

"I think I would rather stay here," she replied, catching through the semi-darkness a sharp glance from Cissy's sparkling eyes. James paused a moment ; then crossed the room, and stood beside Gabrielle's chair.

"Have I done anything to offend you?"

he asked, in a voice too low for other ears.

“No——”

“Then why won't you come?”

Again Gabrielle hesitated. She was “making a fuss,” which she hated. But Cissy's eyes!

“Why won't you come?” he repeated.

No one had ever spoken to her in such a tone, before. It was a tone that she could not resist. “I will come,” she answered boldly, and rose.

“That's all right,” said James, in his ordinary manner. “Cissy, won't you change your mind?”

“No. Don't tease. Go, if you're going,” said Cissy, unceremoniously.

“Olivia, you ought to know,” she exclaimed, as the door closed. “Are you quite—quite certain that Gabrielle—that James——”

"What about them?" asked Olivia.

"Are you certain that James is not smitten with—with anyone? Have you noticed nothing?"

"Nothing whatever. I told you as much before."

And Cissy was silent.

"Olivia is half-witted, where James is concerned," she said to herself, proceeding to chatter upon other topics.

Meanwhile James, on the terrace, was giving Gabrielle an account of his doings in London; of an interview with Mr. Geoffrey Savill; and so forth. Thence, by degrees, he launched into subjects still more interesting. He confided to her an idea which he had carried in his mind, he said, for years—the idea of a great book, to be written some day, a Philosophical Review of European history. Ever since the first conception of this idea, it had been—he told her—more or

less before him ; at all times, in all places, all societies. It had flowed on, like an under-current, beneath the minor interests of life, and had gathered from each fresh grist for its mill. He was by no means certain, however, that the undertaking, when it came to the point, might not prove to be beyond his powers of attainment.

Did Olivia know of this? asked Gabrielle. Olivia? He should rather think not! He never spoke on those matters to his sisters. Women made such mountains of molehills, always, and were so fond of chattering.

"But, James," said Gabrielle, "I am a woman."

He stopped short. Yes, certainly, she was a woman ; and yet——How was it that, somehow, he had grown to regard her, less in her own person, than as a part of himself?

"Did you fancy that you were talking to a man?" she asked, smiling, as he still paused.

"There are exceptions to every rule, Gabrielle. Some women have sense ; and you are one. Or rather, you will be one ; you are a mere child as yet."

"I am not a child. I am nineteen and eight months. I shall be twenty in November," said Gabrielle.

"Well ! let it pass," replied James, impatiently : and returned to his Philosophical Review.

After this evening followed a fortnight unmarked by any event of external importance. To Gabrielle, its one trial was Cissy's continual scrutiny. Cissy repelled the few friendly, albeit timid, overtures on which Gabrielle ventured, with a frigidity the more striking from its contrast to her usual childish vivacity. Marian, though cold by nature, and at this time absorbed in her *trousseau* and the Admiral, was always amiable, always polite. But Cissy—Ga-

brielle could not understand it! Her interest in this pretty and capricious cousin, augmented, nevertheless, day by day. Her wildness, fearlessness, and love of mischief made Gabrielle think of Undine. She could, when she chose, emulate even Olivia, in staidness and good sense; but she usually preferred skipping about the house, like a malicious fairy: playing practical jokes, after an innocent fashion, and teasing every one whom she happened to meet. Every one, that is, save Marian. Marian did not approve of being teased, and was powerless to comprehend a joke. She and Cissy had "gone together," and had dressed alike, throughout the days of nursery and school-room; and Cissy's *esprit de corps* forbade her to injure an old comrade.

Often she would rove away, alone, or accompanied only by Gipsy; and return, after several hours, laden with wild roses,

honeysuckle, foxgloves, and such like spoil : of which fanciful garlands adorned her own hat and Gipsy's neck.

"I soon grow tired of people," she told Olivia : "But flowers are always fresh. A wild rose is worth two women and four men."

One of her chief amusements consisted in galloping round the park, on a pony named Spitfire. She liked to gallop all the mettle out of him, she said ; and the longer that it lasted, the better. She loved all animals, all birds and insects ; and had collected a motley assemblage of pets : whose entire charge she took on herself, and of which she was never weary. She declared, however, that she would part with every one, if she could but get a lion in exchange. It would be such fun to tame him ! Only she feared that, directly he did grow tame, and fond of her, she should hate him.

Fits and starts were the rule of Cissy's

existence. She would sometimes rush to the piano, and practise, perhaps, for half an hour with perfect steadiness; but, in the middle of a bar, would rise abruptly, as she had sat down, and dart away,—days elapsing before she touched another note. Similar impulses—impulses for reading, for drawing, for gardening—would follow in the interim. To two things alone was she constant: the flowers and her pets.

In society, she was at times delightful, at times greatly the reverse. Some persons called her “uncertain;” some, “charming;” some, “a horrid little thing.” Each party spoke the truth, as each had found it. For she never attempted to disguise either her likes or her dislikes; which were both, especially the latter, extremely decided.

Such was Cissy's surface life. Gabrielle, however, suspected that beneath it lay much of which the world in general guessed

nothing. One feeling lay there, of which she guessed nothing, either : a growing attraction towards herself. For Cissy could not succeed in hating Gabrielle. Scrutiny, however suspicious, served only to reveal the truthfulness, the transparent simplicity, of Gabrielle's character ; and to form in the mind of the young censor a sentiment of respect.

"Marian," said she, one day—the last of that quiet fortnight : "Marian, I don't believe a word of The Featherstone's hints about Gabrielle."

"What hints?" inquired Marian, not raising her eyes from the music which she was copying.

"Why, as to James—that she made up to him, and so forth. Since we came home, I have watched her incessantly."

"Dear! What dreadful trouble!" said Marian.

"And I have arrived at the conclusion that it would be simply impossible for Gabrielle to make up to anyone! 'Twas all that horrid little The's spite; I see through it now. I hope, Marian, you'll believe it no more."

"I never did believe it," said Marian; "I mean, I did not think twice about it."

"Didn't you? Why, it stirred me to the depths—turned my soul into a saline draught. The idea of a little designing interloper coming among us, and getting over Olivia, and even James, like that, was more than my weak nature could bear. But I'll have my revenge on The. She will be here next week; and I'll find means, as old nurse used ambiguously to threaten. Poor Gabrielle! What a shame! Exactly the other way, too."

"How the other way?"

"Can't you see, stupid? It is James who

is making up to Gabrielle; not Gabrielle who is making up to James. He follows her like a shadow; and he looks at her 'perpetual:' quite in the orthodox way. He's assuredly caught at last; and delightful it is to behold! I'll give him, for a wedding present, a scroll, with 'Pride must have a Fall' on it, and a border of little gold eagles sitting in dove's nests. Or turning into doves themselves! that would be better: only how could I depict the process? Marian, help me."

"What nonsense you talk, dear Cissy! But, now I think of it, James certainly is rather attentive to Gabrielle."

"Rather attentive! What must very attentive be? As to Olivia, she seems striving to emulate that worthy character, Mrs. Bat's Eyes, in the 'Piljim's Pojess.' I won't enlighten her, though; it would be so odious for Gabrielle. By-the-by, Olivia ima-

gines her to be all but engaged to a Charlie Godfrey, or Garlie Chodfrey, or something of that nature. I know better. Certain people I can read like books ; and Gabrielle is one."

"How absurd ! A girl whom you've known a fortnight !"

"Time has very little to do with that sort of thing, my dear. However, you are not expected to understand it. So go on with your copyings ; and think about 'The Sea, the Sea, the bounding Sea.' You'll be more at home there."

And Cissy, valsing the whole way, departed to the school-room : where Gabrielle was taking advantage of a rainy afternoon, to practise her singing exercises.

"Gabrielle, I'm come to make a confession."

Gabrielle turned round on the music-stool ; and stared, much amazed.

"I've been the Essence of Unkindness to

you ; and I'm very sorry. I won't never be so no more."

"My dear Cissy ! I——"

"No ; don't say you've not noticed it ; don't tell a story. But it wasn't all my own fault. At least—I can't tell you any more," said Cissy, abruptly. "You forgive me ? We must kiss and be friends, then. Suppose we make a compact :

'If you'll love me, as I'll love you,
No knife shall cut our love in two.'"

Gabrielle laughed ; and submitted herself to a demonstrative hug. Thus ended their first and last feud.

"Now finish your singing ; and then, if you don't mind, we'll have some battledore and shuttlecock, in the passage upstairs. Battledore and shuttlecock is my one consolation, on a day like this. Well, Richard ?"

"A note for Miss Wynn, if you please, ma'am. The man is waiting."

Richard tendered on his salver a black-edged envelope, delicately perfumed.

"From Lorton," said Gabrielle, breaking the seal: "An invitation, I daresay. Yes—" looking up a moment later—"Lady Louisa wants me to go there to-morrow."

"To-morrow? What a short notice!"

"A beloved friend of former days, she says, has returned unexpectedly from India; and has offered herself, by an old agreement, to Lady Louisa, for an unlimited stay. She will bring two daughters, two maids, and a governess, so there will then be no room for me."

"And Lady Louisa wants to get you before they come?"

"Yes; or I should miss Charlie Godfrey."

"It is a dreadful bore," said Cissy: "I wish I had made friends with you sooner. We shall have no time, now, to get properly acquainted with one another."

"But I shall be back in a week," said Gabrielle, smiling: as she left the room, in search of Olivia.

Olivia, of course, was delighted. Oh, by all means, Gabrielle must go. In her secret soul, indeed, Olivia felt no doubt but that results the most important would follow. Gabrielle, therefore, wrote to accept the invitation; and wished, the while, that she could have done so with more pleasure. Returning to the school-room, she found Cissy impatient for the battledore and shuttlecock. Whereupon the piano was closed; and they ran upstairs forthwith.

Now was Cissy in her element. She excelled in the art of "Spitfire;" and Gabrielle, under her tuition, soon bade fair to excel likewise. From battledore to battledore the shuttlecock flew; insulted, Cissy observed, wherever it went.

"Two hundred. Two hundred and one.

Two hundred and two. Glorious! Glorious! —Go away, James; we shall miss. Never mind him, Gabrielle—Two hundred and five. Oh, Gabrielle! oh, you stupid child.”

“I am very sorry,” said Gabrielle, laughing and colouring, as the shuttlecock flew past her: “It was James’s fault. He made me nervous, standing there.”

“I make you nervous?” exclaimed James; whom the rap-rap of the combat had attracted to the door of his room: “Nay, Gabrielle, that is hardly fair: when I ‘neither spoke nor moved,’ nor did anything in any way, to arrest the flow of your genius. Cissy, where can I find another battledore? I should like to have a try at it, myself.”

“Wonderful! Wonderful!” cried Cissy, jumping and clapping her hands: “Condescension indeed! Hercules—or who was he? among the pigmies! England’s master-

mind playing battledore and shuttlecock! What shall we see next?"

"Where can I find a battledore?" repeated James.

"Go downstairs, mysterious visitant from a superior realm; look in the school-room cupboard; and there you'll see your own old thing, with your name scratched upon it. Bring it here; and, meanwhile, Gabrielle and I will consider whether we dare admit you to our meaner society."

Before her sentence was finished, James was in the hall: and, a moment later, upstairs again, battledore in hand. His school-boy days might have returned; so eager did he seem.

"I hope you'll show yourself a 'Stoopid,' as Wilcox hath it," said Cissy.

But when did James ever shew himself a "Stoopid," in external things? A steady eye, a sure hand, he possessed to perfection.

Five successive games were cut short by some inadvertence on the part of Gabrielle or Cissy ; and through five successive games James's battledore sent forth stroke after stroke, with the same firm, even sound.

" Oh, you provoking boy ! Must you do everything well ? " said Cissy—petulantly throwing her own away, and sinking on the floor to rest.

James smiled a calm smile of superiority. Cissy was infuriated.

" ' Oh Johnny, she cried,
I'll punish your pride ! ' "

she mentally quoted.

Then, in an unconcerned tone :

" Gabrielle, what time do you go to-morrow ? "

" Soon after luncheon, " said Gabrielle.

" Go ! " repeated James, at once on the *qui vive* : " Where are you going ? "

Cissy, in spirit, clapped her hands.

"Why! has she not told you, James? When I am expecting a treat, I tell the whole world. She's going to Lorton, to be sure; to meet"—Here the naughty child hesitated, glanced at Gabrielle, and tried to look confused—"to meet an—an old—acquaintance—or friend, isn't it, Gabrielle?"—proceeding to hum :

" ' We twa ha' paidelt i' the burn,
Frae morn to eventyne.' "

James also glanced at Gabrielle. Her colour rose. Again a spiritual clap on the part of Cissy.

"I'm sorry you're going, dear; we shall miss you. At least, I shall. But, of course, you can't re-echo the sentiment. New friends are not old ones, everybody knows; and we're all new friends here *We've* got no sweet 'auld acquaintance' with her, Gipsy, my darling, have we?—or 'days of lang syne.' "

A pause. Gabrielle was silent, a little embarrassed. James was silent also. He leant against the wall, looking down—apparently at his boots.

“What’s the matter, James? What makes you so glumpy? I’m rested. Will you have another game?”

“I!” cried James, with a start: “No more games for me! I’ve wasted time enough.”

He ran downstairs; snatched up a straw hat, which lay on the hall table; and, banging the door behind him, went out into the rain.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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LONDON: PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE.

